

with different words, the ones written by Wobbly Joe Hill and the Dust Bowl troubadour, Woody Guthrie. I was thrilled with the working-class emphasis of the southern women, but I was also disturbed by their belief that racism and male chauvinism were only products of capitalism and the ruling-class false consciousness that would disappear with the triumph of the poor, black and white together. I felt they were not realistic about the roots of working-class white supremacy and patriarchy.

I disagreed even more with their interpretation of U.S. history; that a great democratic republic was founded with the American Revolution and that U.S. history was a process of struggle for incorporation into that original idea. Theft of the continent from its original inhabitants was not mentioned, nor was the slaughter of the Indians and the annexation of half of Mexico, nor was the fact that women had been suppressed long before capitalism. It seemed that, from their point of view, African slavery and the racial segregation that endured after slavery ended had been the only historical barrier on the road to inevitable socialism and women's liberation.

After the conference, Lyn Wells took me to the SSOC house to spend the night. I asked her about the SNCC document on women I'd heard about, and she readily found a copy for me to read. It was titled "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo from Casey Hayden and Mary King to a Number of Other Women in the Peace and Freedom Movements: November 18, 1965." My eyes fell to the second paragraph:

Sex and caste: There seem to be many parallels that can be drawn between treatment of Negroes and treatment of women in our society as a whole. But in particular, women we've talked to who work in the movement seem to be caught up in a common-law caste system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which may exclude them. Women seem to be placed in the same position of assumed subordination in personal situations too. It is a caste system, which, at its worst, uses and exploits women.

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Breathlessly, I read through the whole paper, but my heart sank when I reached the last paragraph: "Objectively, the chances seem nil that we could start a movement based on anything as distant to general American thought as a sex-caste system. Therefore, most of us will probably want to work full time on problems such as war, poverty, race."

The statement ended with a pitiful plea for better treatment of women within the movement.

"What happened with this?" I asked Lyn.

"Nothing. Oh, they read it in a meeting. That's when Stokely Carmichael supposedly made the infamous remark that the only position for women in the movement was prone," she said.

"Of course, I know about that. We quoted him in the first issue of the journal," I said.

"Stokely didn't say that at the meeting, but at a party afterward. He was joking. Mary King said Stokely was more supportive than most of the men, black or white," she said.

But I wondered what had prevented those two strong women from striking out and launching a women's movement four years earlier, and what effect it would have had on me and on the radical movement, had we had the opportunity to read their statement when it was written. I guessed that they hadn't insisted on women's liberation then for the same reason I had not—fear of losing the respect of their men and of being accused of self-indulgence and racism.

"Here's another paper that might interest you. Have you seen it?" Lyn handed me a copy of the SDS's *New Left Notes*, dated July 10, 1967. I hadn't seen it.

The following analysis of women's role came out of the Women's Liberation workshop . . . We call for all programs which will free women from their traditional roles in order that we may participate with all of our resources and energies in meaningful and creative activity. The family unit perpetuates the traditional role of women and the autocratic and paternalistic role of men. Therefore, we must

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seek new forms that will allow children to develop in an environment which is democratic and where the relationships between people are those of equal human beings.

Written by SDS secretary Bernardine Dohrn, the article called for communal child care centers staffed equally by men and women. It called for dissemination of birth control information and devices, demanded legalized abortion, and demanded that SDS men deal with their male chauvinism.

"Why are movement women so evasive or secretive about women's liberation when they are so conscious of it?" I asked. Bernardine Dohrn, who I thought of as flamboyantly sexy and male-identified, was now the head of SDS, and she had publicly denounced women's liberation as a bourgeois distraction.

"We're afraid of splitting the movement and playing into the hands of the enemy by exploiting the division between women and men. First, we're divided by black and white, now this PL factionalism. One more division and the movement will be dead," Lyn said.

"But women may be able to enliven and transform the movement. Why suppress women's liberation? You support Black Power," I said.

"That's where you women libbers and we movement women differ. Lyn's words stung me and made me again feel like an outsider, not accepted in the movement.

Lyn put on a record, and I heard the words, "Let him sing me back home a song I used to hear. Make my old memories come alive. Sing me away and turn back the year. Sing me home before I die."

"Who is that singing Merle Haggard's song?" I asked. Lyn said it was from a new record album by the Everly Brothers called *Roots*.

"The Everly Brothers!" I exclaimed in wonder. They were popular in my own teenage years in Oklahoma, with their wildly popular cute versions of "Bye, Bye, Love" and "Wake Up, Little Susie." But the new album was something else. The brothers, who were my age, had discovered their roots. The family had, like so many rural, white Appalachians, migrated

to Chicago's South Side when the boys were young. On the album were their own new songs telling that story, and covers of old favorites, like "T for Texas, T for Tennessee," and also covers of two Merle Haggard songs, "Sing Me Back Home" and "Mama Tried." It was hard to believe these were the same Everly Brothers and it was profoundly meaningful to me. Then Lyn put on a new Merle Haggard single, "Hungry Eyes."

A canvas-covered cabin in a crowded labor camp stands out in this memory I revive cause my daddy raised a family there with two hard-working hands and tried to feed my mama's hungry eyes. He dreamed of something better there and my mama's faith was strong and us kids were just too young to realize that another class of people put us somewhere just below one more reason for my mama's hungry eyes.

Mama never had the luxuries she wanted But it wasn't cause my daddy didn't try She only wanted things she really needed One more reason for my mama's hungry eyes I can still recall my mama's hungry eyes

"Merle Haggard's from a Dust Bowl Okie family, Bakersfield," Lyn said. "I know, I feel like he's singing my life," I said. The record played through the night. I lay awake for a long time thinking about what Lyn had said, feeling hurt. I recalled the morning workshop and the talks I'd had with women. There *would* be a women's liberation movement. Nothing could stop it. But I realized that without the social consciousness and organizing experience of movement radicals, the women's liberation movement would not be able to maintain an anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist framework.

I decided to forge a closer relationship with the New Left, as it seemed to me necessary to transform the already existing movement, not to separate from it. In late February, soon after returning from Atlanta, I had the opportunity to meet Bernardine Dohrn. After my week in Atlanta, I had come to believe that Bernardine was the single most important movement leader to win over to the women's liberation movement.

Up to then my relationship with SDS had been sporadic, distant, and limited. Early on during my four years at UCLA, the predominant radical student group had been the DuBois Club, which was a creation of the Soviet-affiliated U.S. Communist Party. It was not that visible on campus, limited by their obvious ties to the CP and their unwillingness to recruit anyone with the slightest imagination. (They did, however, manage to recruit more than their share of FBI informers and promote them to top positions.) By definition, the term "New Left" implied an "old Left," and that old Left included a number of Left formations, but the CP had been the primary organization on the U.S. Left since its founding soon after the Russian revolution in 1917. Naturally, the CP/DuBois Club was hostile to SDS—the founding organization of the "New Left"—at first, but as SDS gained credibility and ballooned in absolute numbers and in the number of campuses with active chapters, the CP assigned its DuBois Club members to SDS at UCLA, as well as on other campuses. But so did another communist party, the Progressive Labor Party (PL), which had been founded by dissident CP leaders at the time of the split between Mao's China and Khrushchev's USSR in the early sixties.

The Progressive Labor Party, being as mistrustful of independent thinking as their adversaries in the CP, also managed to recruit FBI informers, so that between the CP and PL, the FBI controlled SDS at UCLA, and it never grew there as it did on midwestern and eastern campuses. In my own political work at UCLA, I had mostly ignored SDS and was involved in anti-apartheid and anti-racist work and labor organizing of graduate students. The year after I left UCLA, it became a real cauldron of political activity, but even then the thrust came not from SDS, but rather from African-American and Chicano students who were link-

ing campus issues to their home communities in South Central and East L.A. I worked with more New Left thinkers and organizers in London during the summer of 1967 than in all my years at UCLA.

Once on the East Coast, I became well acquainted with the New Left and, of course, I met New Left women—Marilyn Webb, Rosalyn Baxandall, Carol Hanish, Judith Brown, Linda Gordon, Meredith Tax, Sue Munaker, and many others—in the women's liberation movement. Their complaints about male radicals matched my own experiences in London, but I had no idea how pronounced male supremacy was in the New Left until those first few months of 1969, in Boston.

The national SDS office was in Chicago, but I met Bernardine at Abby's house in Cambridge while she was on a fund-raising mission. Abby had long funded SDS anti-war and anti-poverty organizing, but this was the first time she would be considering an SDS request for money since she had joined our women's liberation group. She had questions for Bernardine, and she invited me to be there to assist her in asking them and to possibly influence Bernardine to support the women's liberation movement.

I prepared a collection of our flyers, pamphlets, and the two issues of the journal to give to Bernardine. Recently, she had attacked the women's movement in an article, writing that it was bourgeois, unconcerned with working-class women, and racist. She accused women's liberation of focusing only on sexual exploitation and consumerism without analyzing the causes of oppression or accurately identifying the enemy—capitalism and imperialism. I thought Bernardine's criticisms were true of some women's groups and individuals—some *were* middle-class and self-indulgent; but it seemed to me that most of the women who joined our group immediately adopted anti-imperialist and anti-racist perspectives if they didn't already have them. I knew that was largely due to my own perspective, and I felt more women leaders of like thinking would have to form a critical mass in the growing women's movement. I regarded Bernardine as a potential ally in this struggle, though I was suspicious of her motivations for eschewing the women's liberation movement, think-

ing that perhaps she feared sacrificing her privilege of being "one of the boys," the sort of queen of a male fraternity, as the first and only female SDS national officer.

"How do you explain your comments on women's liberation as bourgeois bullshit?" Abby asked Bernardine.

"Everywhere I travel SDS chapters have shrunk, and most of the women have left and formed women's groups," Bernardine said.

"Did it occur to you that women's liberation might be more revolutionary than SDS?" Abby asked. Bernardine laughed, but Abby didn't mean her question as a joke and she glowered. Bernardine squirmed.

"Look, I have to drive to Chicago tonight and I'm exhausted. I don't want to debate the woman question," Bernardine said, serious now.

"No one in SDS does. Women's liberation is too real. SDS has become one big, dreary male power play," Abby said. They argued and Abby read Bernardine passages from my essay, "Female Liberation as the Basis for Social Revolution."

I took over from Abby, explaining that patriarchy reproduced itself in every institution formed in the society, including SDS, and including every male-female sexual relationship. I said that there would not be a socialist revolution in the United States or anywhere until women were free, autonomous, and leading the movement. I angrily said, "It's not about self-indulgence, and if you're really a revolutionary, you'll pay attention. Female liberation is about revolution."

Bernardine left empty-handed, promising to read the materials and get back to us, but she never did.

There was a young man with Bernardine who was acting as her driver and bodyguard that night. Homer drove a cab for a living, so he wore a Yellow Cab cap. Standing in Abby's doorway for two hours, he looked altogether like a working stiff, dressed in dungarees, a wool plaid shirt neatly tucked in, a wide belt, and a bomber jacket. His hair was unfashionably short. I would soon discover that this was the SDS male style. The day after the meeting, he called to invite me to a dinner party.

Homer had been in the Boston area only since his return from Hanoi

a few months earlier, and he had been sleeping on friends' couches, not certain he would stay. Before his mission to Hanoi to bring back U.S. POWs that the North Vietnamese would hand over only to SDS, he had worked in New Jersey in one of the SDS community organizing projects. Before that he had been a student at Swarthmore College and one of the authors, along with Tom Hayden, Al and Barbara Haber, and a handful of others, of SDS's 1962 Port Huron Statement, which separated the organization from its parent body that was headed by Michael Harrington. The young white men and women at Port Huron declared: "We regard men [sic] as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom and love." No longer a student offshoot of a liberal, anti-communist, labor-based institution, SDS took off as a radical, decentralized movement of young, mostly white students who had been transformed by the black student movement in the South. By 1969, SDS could boast 100,000 members.

I wanted to know everything Homer knew about Vietnam from his visit there, especially about Nguyen Thi Binh, the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) woman who was now their negotiator in Paris. He said he had met her, that she headed the women's organization. Then he told me a story he had heard from her about the thousands of Vietnamese girls forced into prostitution under French occupation. When Madame Binh set up the National Liberation Front's women's organization, she established a priority for caring for prostitutes. The way in which Madame Binh went about it was to develop a program to take the women to the countryside. Cadre from the women's organization catered to the prostitutes. They cooked, washed, cleaned, bathed them, washed their hair and combed it, as if they were children. They even gave the prostitutes dolls to play with. Madame Binh's theory was that those women had been so mistreated and bore such scars that they were dead inside. They had to be born again, to go through the childhood they had never enjoyed. Then the women's organization arranged for them to be trained as nurses, secretaries, soldiers, mechanics—whatever they chose to do—and found jobs and homes for them and their children.

Homer's entire adult life had been spent in the movement. After high school, he had jumped into the southern civil rights movement, SDS, and anti-Vietnam War activities. I envied his early and constant involvement in the movement. When he joined SDS in 1963, I had been married for five years and had a ten-month-old baby, and had just read *The Second Sex*. I told Homer of my envy and he challenged it.

"Well it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. You have life experience and I have movement experience. I respect your kind of experience more than mine," he said.

But I knew better. I knew that I had missed that moment of the coming together of the "beloved community" of the civil rights movement, when white and black, men and women lived and worked under the threat of death and forged a bond of love and a vision of what a future society might be like. Even though it had proved short-lived, I longed to have had that experience.

Homer was the first person from inside the movement I'd gotten to know well so far, and he explained and demonstrated to me that the movement was haphazard, that much of what went on resulted from personal power plays, just like mainstream politics. I asked him how he and others were "chosen" to travel to Hanoi and was shocked when he told me that Tom Hayden had selected him, he believed, because Tom was trying to make up for having stolen his girlfriend. I was determined to see to it that women's liberation would lead in a new and democratic direction, that it would implement the SDS ideal of participatory democracy that was not yet being realized. Homer was equally committed to that goal in his antiwar work.

Soon Homer moved into the extra room in our flat. He and Hannah were instant buddies. I joined Homer on the editorial collective of the *Ole Mole*, the local radical monthly. Together we studied the civil rights movement, the history of the U.S. Communist Party in the thirties, the Wobblies, and Rosa Luxemburg's critiques of authoritarianism. We studied Lenin and plowed into Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and the Irish question, and then we took on the Third World revolutions,

especially China. From our conclusions, we wrote a long essay, "The Movement and the Working Class," that was published by the New England Free Press.

We spent many nights in the basement that contained the *Ole Mole* machinery, getting the paper out and hanging out in Noam Chomsky's MIT office, talking for hours. Noam was only forty years old then, but seemed a wise sage with vast knowledge beyond his academic field of linguistics. He provided concrete historical examples of how we might organize for a new society—the Spanish anarchist collectives of the 1930s and the Jewish kibbutz movement in Palestine before the establishment of the state of Israel.

By that winter of 1969, SDS was near its dissolution, which would effectively occur in June. The writing was on the wall in Cambridge, where the Progressive Labor Party, under the banner of "Worker-Student Alliance," was close to dominating the Harvard SDS chapter. Beleaguered New Left radicals clustered around the *Ole Mole*, the Boston Draft Resistance Group, and other dynamic projects off campus, fighting to salvage SDS.

PL's call for students to ally themselves with workers had attracted much of the SDS membership, but now PL had taken to condemning the Vietnamese for selling out to imperialism because they were engaged in peace negotiations with the United States. Yet Vietnam's demands were absolute—withdrawal of all U.S. personnel and reunification of Vietnam, demands from which they never wavered until they won them in 1975.

At the national SDS meeting in June, Dohrn would expel PL, but not all the anti-PLers went along with her Weatherman faction. Rather they split into two factions—Revolutionary Youth Movement I and II—with one faction following Bernardine and a smaller faction following former SDS president Mike Klonsky and Lyn Wells, who had recently dissolved SSOC to avoid a PL takeover.

By 1969, PL had become as ossified and authoritarian as the CP. I considered myself a Maoist in terms of viewing national liberation of the Third

World from Europe and the United States as the primary task at hand, but I had little interest in the internal workings of Russia or China, or any other country except for the United States. I was simply interested in adapting whatever might be useful to make a revolution in the United States.

I was not prepared to take sides in the SDS dispute until I saw it for myself. I thought the worker-student alliance concept was important, but I had witnessed and experienced PL disruptive and rote behavior and couldn't take them seriously. For instance, PL women would disrupt women's liberation events, yelling, "Is Jacqueline Onassis oppressed?" Between Abbie Hoffman's YIPPIE antics for media attention at one end of the scale and puritanical and rigid PL at the other end, the middle ground seemed to have disappeared, which led me to an even deeper commitment to the women's liberation movement. Perhaps it was similar frustrations that led others to choose to go underground not long after.

For a moment it appeared that SDS at Harvard would emerge united, based on their actions that led to a campus takeover in early April. Both SDS factions joined the occupation and gained the sympathy of much of the student body and faculty. Homer and I volunteered to hide "expropriated" university documents that proved Harvard's complicity with corporations and the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon. But once the occupation ended, as well as the school year, the factions were at each other's throats again, and two months later at the SDS national meeting, SDS disintegrated in chaos.

In early April 1969, I was christened as a movement speaker. The occasion was the first anti-war rally organized by the Springfield chapter of the Movement for a Democratic Society, a new national organization made up of older, post-student SDS members. Homer had been invited to speak about his trip to Hanoi, but he insisted that I speak instead, on the need for women's liberation in order to eradicate militarism and imperialism.

The organizers had expected a turnout of hundreds but Mother Nature had intervened and brought torrential rain that was expected to turn to snow in the evening. We were preaching to a small choir. I stood

on the flatbed of a truck with icy rain pounding on my back. I gazed at the men and women who mingled, ankle deep in mud. I couldn't see their faces or forms—they were all draped in hooded rain gear or huddled under umbrellas. Homer held an umbrella over my head.

David Dellinger, one of Homer's mentors, spoke about the Vietnam War. He was a veteran pacifist who strongly opposed U.S. involvement in Vietnam. He was also one of the Chicago Seven defendants charged with criminal conspiracy stemming from the Chicago police riot at the Democratic Convention the summer before. He had been in jail hundreds of times for civil disobedience, but this was the most serious charge against him in his lifetime of pacifism. I had heard him speak at one of the UCLA Vietnam teach-ins three years before, and although I did not share the pacifist philosophy, I was in awe of Dellinger and found it hard to believe that I was now sharing the stage with him. I was the next speaker.

When we first arrived and I observed the small turnout, I assumed the rally would be canceled and we would all go someplace warm to talk. But that option seemed not to have occurred to anyone. When I suggested it—partly having "cold feet" from more than the weather—Dave Dellinger said something I never forgot: "Never cancel a rally or a meeting. That's the golden rule of the movement. If even 1 person has trouble to come, carry on as if there are 1,000. Every individual counts and bearing witness counts."

As Dave spoke of his trip to Hanoi, I shook from the cold, but also in fear. I had never spoken about women's liberation in any context other than women's liberation. Dave's voice carried through the bullhorn, but I feared that mine would not. No wonder the status of a Wobbly had depended on volume in the days before loudspeakers—Mother Jones, Emma Goldman, Big Bill Haywood, my grandfather—all of them belted like opera singers. My turn came, and I took the heavy megaphone and began to speak. The fear drained from my body.

The Vietnam War is our generation's Indian war. There's an Indian war every generation to validate and confirm the twin origin-

inal sins of this country—genocide against the Indians and African slavery. It's a pattern buttressed by entrenched patriarchy in which every white man can feel he is a participant and a beneficiary. Patriotism is the public expression of patriarchy—the control of women, peasants, and nature. Women's Liberation is the most important, the most revolutionary social force to appear in the long history of resistance to oppression, exploitation, colonialism, racism, and imperialism. Always before, well-meaning, angry and dedicated males have risen up to slay the fathers, but always they have merely replaced them. This time the chain of patriarchy will be broken. The Vietnamese resistance occurs within this new consciousness of the female principle of life. It is no accident. A Vietnamese victory against the temple of patriarchy, U.S. imperialism, will make of the empire a Humpty-Dumpty. Women's Liberation will determine the structures of the new society and the character of the new human being.

I heard applause. Dave shook my hand and Homer hugged me.

That day was the beginning of the work that would ultimately take me out of the confines of the women's liberation movement context. It was also the first occasion on which I attracted the attention of the FBI, or at least it's the first item contained in my bulky FBI file, with the notation: "ROXANNE DUNBAR: Dunbar represented the Female Liberation Movement (FLM) when she addressed a Rally for Peace on April 19, 1969, at Springfield, Massachusetts."

Then I met the Vietnamese. Ten miles south of Montreal was a former dairy farm that an American pacifist couple had converted to a conference center. It was only a few miles from the U.S. border at Vermont, and an easy drive from New York and Boston. There, representatives of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front and the North Vietnamese government, who were not allowed into the United States, could meet with U.S. antiwar activists. Similar meetings took place in Toronto and Vancouver.

The meeting was organized by women, not feminists—not yet any way—but women peace activists. The Vietnamese guests were three National Liberation Front women representatives and their three male interpreters. The one-day meeting was billed as a women-to-women dialogue about the war, but men were also welcomed. Of course, Homer had been invited. Inside what had once been a dairy barn was a makeshift theater. The Vietnamese were already on stage, ready to begin when we arrived. Homer ran up to them—one of the interpreters had been his interpreter in Hanoi.

I had never seen a Vietnamese in person, and I was overwhelmed with emotion. Here were representatives of the valiant people who were defeating the biggest war machine in human history, defying the magic of money and technology. It gave me hope and optimism to know that these people made sacrifices to fight for a noble cause, to know that David could still resist Goliath, that peasants in rice fields could bring down million-dollar fighter planes.

The Vietnamese women made long, formal presentations through the interpreters. They explained the current war situation in detail. They said that the Vietnamese people would fight on forever for freedom, that they had been fighting invaders for centuries, and that although American technology killed peasants and destroyed cities and ancient forests, it would never defeat the Vietnamese fight for independence and freedom. They did not mention women except in reference to rape.

During the discussion period, the Vietnamese women responded to questions about women by describing their work organizing women for "patriotic and anti-imperialist" duties, about women's bravery and "contributions" in all aspects of the war effort, including being guerrillas, about how important it was for us American women—as mothers, sisters, and wives of U.S. soldiers—to love our soldiers and to save their lives by ending the war so they could return home. They emphasized that the Vietnamese people harbored no hatred for the soldiers or the American people and that they depended on American mothers, especially, to stop the war.

When questions regarding sexuality or male chauvinism arose, the Vietnamese women were reticent, even shy, and did not respond. They discussed the widespread problem of prostitution left by the French colonialists and how the NLF women's section had set about to reform the women—the story Homer had told me. An American woman asked about lesbians and was met with hisses from the audience. The Vietnamese women appeared not to understand the question, and when it was presumably explained more explicitly, they giggled shyly and evaded the question.

Toward the end of the long day, an older woman asked how we might help and where to send money. The NLF women said that they did not need American money. It seemed to me that the Vietnamese perceived that giving money was a means for people in the United States to absolve guilt, easier than mobilizing the population and changing U.S. government policy.

As we drove back to Boston, Homer related a story about Tran, his guide in Hanoi. As a teenager in the early 1950s, Tran had fought as a guerrilla in Ho Chi Minh's forces against the French. After the French withdrew from the north in 1954, he was sent south to organize clandestinely in a provincial capital. Tran was from a middle-class Saigon family and had never lived in the provinces, so he had to figure out how to blend in. The town's main enterprise was the production of Western clothing for export so he worked as an apprentice to a tailor. For five years, Tran organized a trade union of tailors. After 1960, when the NLF was well established in the south, he began recruiting individuals from the town to join. By the time he left, after organizing alone for twelve years, all the tailors and their families were allied with the National Liberation Front. Tran claimed that that was why the Americans would never defeat the NLF; because he was only one among thousands who organized in that manner.

That story, like many others I'd heard—the tunnels and underground factories, the booby traps—inspired me. I, too, wanted to dig deep roots in a community, but our enemy wasn't an invading foreign power, rather, it was our own government. Our task as revolutionaries in the United

States seemed more urgent because our government, with the tacit support of U.S. citizens, was hurting so many people around the world. We had to stop it—it felt like there was no time for the long haul. The Vietnamese, the Third World, could not survive our wars against them and possible nuclear war in the meantime. So I didn't apply the lessons of Vietnam to my choices, but rather thought only in terms of how to stop the U.S. military machine. This kind of panicked thinking was shared by many of us then, and it led to the kind of disastrous short-term actions that began to characterize the antiwar movement.

Cell 16 met the day after I returned from Montreal. I was vibrant with excitement and started telling them about the Vietnamese women.

"You know this meeting is about planning for the conference?" Dana asked. We were organizing a New England regional women's liberation conference for Mother's Day weekend.

"I took flyers to Montreal and gave them out to women from New England," I said.

"That's not the point. You've worked on the conference but your mind is somewhere else. You're drifting away from the group and from women's liberation, Roxanne," Abby said.

Abby's words stung. I felt anger rising inside of me and had to anchor myself not to slam out of the office.

"You haven't been to Tae Kwan Do class for weeks," Jayne said. Jayne was nineteen, our youngest member, and was now our Tae Kwan Do teacher. She was right—I hadn't even been practicing.

"Is this about Homer? All of you have your private lives, too." I heard the defensive tone in my voice.

"But our private lives are private. Your private life with Homer is public." Dana said. It was true. I had been drifting away from the group, moving increasingly into Homer's world and work. I spent more time at the *Ole Mole* than in the Cell 16 office.

"I don't want to see women's liberation become a tool of the system to divert attention away from ending the war and the struggle against

racism, and there are movement men like Homer who are our allies," I said.

"You sound like Bernardine. Don't you see that's the goal of all of us? But to do that, women's liberation must be woman-centered, with women's oppression the priority. It's your own analysis," Dana said.

The meeting ended without resolution. I felt rejected, unappreciated, defensive, and threatened. When Homer returned from his shift driving the cab, I related the experience.

"They're right. From now on we'll focus on women's liberation, and discuss what we do together publicly with the whole group," I said. Homer agreed.

Poor Homer. He wanted to promote women's liberation and work with men to struggle against their male chauvinism but feminists resented him. On the other hand the moniker "pussey-whipped" hissed from some mouths of male radicals when they spoke of Homer's "new political direction." But he didn't flinch in his commitment to making women's liberation central to his work.

I got back to work with Cell 16, filling orders for the journal, planning public meetings, Tae Kwan Do practice, and street hawking. And then the perfect issue arose to help me refocus my energies.

A man named Antone Costa, whom the papers said "lived a hippy-style life," was charged with the murders of an untold number of women, a gruesome story that replaced the Vietnam War and antiwar protests on the front page of the *Boston Globe*. Dismembered bodies of a number of women had been discovered and dug up on Cape Cod as the snow melted. The headlines screamed: "MORE SLAIN GIRLS!" Arms, legs, heads, and "torsos slashed in the pelvic region," were found around the town of Truro. The body parts didn't add up to complete bodies. The police reported that flesh had been chewed off the bones on the arms and legs and that the hearts had been cut out of the bodies and were missing entirely.

The newspapers reported that women were terrified to go outside their homes, and police advised them not to go out without a man. It was reported that Radcliffe "girls" had invited Harvard "men" over to spend

the night and protect them; the men said they were delighted to do so. We were told that 2,000 to 3,000 females were missing across the United States, and the newspapers relished other mass and serial murders of women.

In Cell 16, we were enraged with the reportage as well as the reality of these crimes against women. Surrounded by the newspaper accounts, and full of anger, Dana and I wrote a leaflet we titled "More Slain Girls," and our whole group fanned out over the Boston area, posting it and handing it out on the streets.

MORE SLAIN GIRLS

Antone Costa's is not an exceptional case. True, disembodied limbs and heads are not discovered daily, but they exist in nearly every man's fantasy. How would it be otherwise, given the objectification of women? Constantly we see parts of her—head, breasts, legs. She is the goddess-toy, play bunny to be manipulated—a cutout doll.

In fact, it is not just fantasy. Women are attacked, raped, cut-up, chewed upon, slashed in the "pelvic region," have their hearts removed (and eaten?), strangled, impaled in the vagina with brooms. And the newspapers make more money.

We hear a lot from men about how they have to protect women. From whom? Other women? And if women so much as suggest that they are going to begin defending themselves, the men accuse them of wanting to kill them, cut them up. It must be that they have a guilty conscience, recognizing in themselves the pervert they imagine to be after "their woman," and who often is, in fact.

We read in the papers that there are 2000–3000 missing females in the United States, and that there are probably more dismembered bodies planted around Truro.

All this sounds like the lynching of Blacks, though it is universally regarded as merely a natural misfortune. The only lesson to be drawn from the "tragedy" is that women should not venture out

unprotected—that is unescorted by a man. Which, in fact, was the rationale of the lynch mob or individual murderers of Blacks—that any “nigger” without a master was free game.

The argument usually given in explanation for sex crimes is that the assailant was probably sexually repressed, had no access to a “normal” relationship with “his own woman.” Women are so hungry for love in this sick society that it’s not that hard to get “normal” women to go to bed with a man. Almost any man has access to “free” “love” and all men can get it for money.

The sex criminals don’t want a “normal” relationship with a woman. They want the brutality, the dismemberment, in reality, not just in fantasy.

The guilt is not on women for denying normal outlets to men. The guilt is on society for permitting the objectification of women and the cultivation in men of an attitude of brutality toward women. It is “manly” to “treat ‘em rough.” Pornographic movies and novels play up to men’s sadistic fantasies.

This whole mystique must be destroyed. We must learn to fight back. It must become as dangerous to attack a woman as to attack another man. We will not be raped! We will not be chewed upon! We will not be slashed! We will not be “treated rough” by any man, “brute” or pervert. We will not be leered at, smirked at, or whistled at by men enjoying their private fantasies of rape and dismemberment.

**WATCH OUT—MAYBE YOU’LL FINALLY MEET A REAL
CASTRATING FEMALE!**

Female Liberation.

I also threw myself into organizing the New England Regional Female Liberation Conference, to be held on Mother’s Day. Planning for the conference galvanized Cell 16 and strengthened our ties with other women in the Boston area, especially the New Left women and students in the many women’s colleges. By that time, several dozen women had become

aligned with Cell 16 at some level, and many more used our journal and other writings in forming new women’s groups. Two of our new student members from Emmanuel College, a Catholic women’s school in Boston, had arranged for the conference to be held on their campus.

In addition to Cell 16, women from the draft resistance movement, SDS, National Welfare Rights, and independent students were invited to help with the organizing and to propose workshops. Each workshop was to be autonomous, and there were no plenary meetings, except for the Tae Kwan Do participatory workshop that Abby and Jayne organized. The *Ole Mole* devoted the cover and nearly the whole of the May 9–22 issue to the conference. I wrote an article for it, “Organization and Leadership,” in which I explained how the conference had been organized, criticizing the usual New Left style:

The decision to hold a female liberation regional conference presupposes some sort of organization and leadership. Yet, such did not exist when the conference was decided upon. Many people seem to think that the female liberation movement has easily coalesced itself into a coherent form; that the movement is “spontaneous.” Many people think that the cellular structure of the movement that has emerged uniformly throughout the country indicates that no leadership, no organizations, and no conscious development of theory and use of propaganda are needed.

A false dichotomy has developed: either the movement must be spontaneous, groovy, and unled (“unmanipulated”) or there must be a monolithic national superstructure with an elite corps of leaders at the top, far removed from the chapters which are largely ignorant of the theory and dealings of the people at the top (caricature of the SDS model).

Neither model seems desirable or necessary, and both are a danger to the movement. Both indicate a lack of consciousness and potential for effectiveness. Both cheat the newly awakened people (awakened by existent conditions, not by leaders).

I went on to explain in some detail the process we had used. The article also stated the principles of Cell 16:

... females form a lower caste in all existing social structures, and a powerless economic class in capitalistic America. They believe that the destruction of the family, private property, and the national state are essential for the liberation of females, and that a revolutionary program is required to destroy those institutions. They conceive of themselves as an educational cadre to teach theory and self-defense, which will lead to the development of a revolutionary program.

The conference had not been much publicized outside New England, but women arrived from New York and Pennsylvania and Ohio. We had expected about 100 participants, but more than 500 women of all ages, from all occupations—mostly white, but with a fair sprinkling of blacks and Puerto Ricans—flooded the hallways and classrooms.

The press was barred from covering the conference, and there were to be no "stars," no plenary speakers. Everyone was equal in participating, learning, sharing, and teaching for two electrifying days.

I chaired two workshops—one on "Strategy and Tactics of a Female Liberation Movement" and one on "Female Liberation and Communism." Hannah ran a workshop on "The History and Practice of Witchcraft" and a demonstration of Tarot card reading. There were workshops on child care, health, welfare, the media, black women, psychology, sex, problems of high school for girls, women writers, abortion and birth control, crime, working women, the family as the basic unit of female oppression, and interracial marriages. Even Sue Katz, the first movement woman I'd met in Boston when I proposed a course on women's history at the draft resistance school, had become a convert to women's liberation; she organized the session on community child care. Homer recruited movement men to provide on-site child care and shuttle service.

After the conference the office telephone rang constantly with calls from women wanting to join our group, wanting us to help them start their own groups, or wanting one of us to speak to their group. We were overjoyed but also overwhelmed by the unexpected deluge of interest.

Basking in the afterglow of the successful conference, we were stunned to find a contemptuous parody of the event in *New York* magazine, a feature story by a registered participant, Julie Baumgold. After scorning the sessions, which she described as being about "Maoism and Amazons," most of the article mocked Abby and her Tae Kwan Do. I was with Abby in her kitchen when a call came from her mother that reduced her to tears. We were all angry and crushed by the article, but only Abby faced attacks from her family—any public act by a Rockefeller was newsworthy in New York.

A second blow came soon thereafter: the leftist weekly *Guardian* reported on our conference. Margie Starnberg, another conference participant, wrote the piece as a personal essay relating her emotional reactions. Her touchy-feely, depoliticized account offended us more than the mainstream *New York* article had. Starnberg also focused on Tae Kwan Do: "We kept returning to the gym . . . From time to time, a woman walked to a corner of the room and broke a board with her fist, with her foot." She designated Abby and me as the "stars" of the conference and did not describe any of the workshops. Starnberg created the illusion of a violence-driven cult. Abby and I wrote a long, angry response, which the *Guardian* published. In it we noted that the most popular, overflowing workshops were those on "The Family as the Basic Unit of Female Oppression" and "Strategy and Tactics for a Female Liberation Movement," each with 200 participants, many times larger than the martial arts workshops.

Despite the sour note of feeling misunderstood by people who should have been allies, I was happy with my situation, particularly in having a trusting, committed relationship with Homer. I was exhausted from the months of teaching three days a week and organizing the conference, but once free of those obligations, I began to travel all over New England, talking to women's groups about female liberation.

One evening in June, I was in Tae Kwan Do class—I never missed class anymore—with twenty other women. We moved in unison, punching the air, practicing the basic forms. Suddenly a woman in street clothes stood directly in front of me and raised a shiny object.

"This is my assassin," I said to myself. I was certain that the object she held was a handgun or perhaps a knife. The bright flash nearly made me faint in terror. Blinded momentarily, I awaited the explosion in my head. I opened my eyes and she was gone. A photographer. The class didn't miss a beat.

The following day a reporter from the *London Times Magazine* appeared at my door with a copy of the photograph and wanted an interview. In the black-and-white photo I looked exactly as I'd felt—terror in my eyes, my extended fist askew.

"We'll publish a story anyway, so you might as well talk to me," the reporter said.

I invited her in and called each of the core members of Cell 16. The consensus was that I should give the interview and try to communicate what we were really about. The reporter informed me that the photographer was the well-known Diane Arbus.

"How did she know what I looked like and where to find me?" I asked. "Diane has her ways. That's why she's a first-class photo-journalist and why we commissioned her." I thought: No wonder the people in her photographs all look like freaks and victims.

After the *London Times Magazine* published the photograph and article, I was deluged with requests for interviews, television appearances, and photographs. I refused them all. David Frost called personally and kept me on the telephone for an hour. Another reporter, Sara Davidson, showed up unannounced at the Tae Kwan Do class. We allowed her to watch, as she expressed interest in joining the class and claimed to be "into women's liberation." She sat on the bench taking notes. At the end of the class, she asked for an interview with me.

"I think not. We've had some pretty bad publicity, and we don't want to promote stars in the women's movement," I said.

She persisted.

"It's for *Life* magazine and will be read by 8 million ordinary people, most of them women."

"No, no," I said, and walked away.

Despite my refusals, the attention I was drawing created friction between me and the other members of Cell 16, and there was continuing disapproval of my antiwar work with Homer. Organizers of the GI Coffee House movement—social centers located near military bases that brought antiwar information to active GIs—were hosting an August speaking tour for Homer. Originally, they were going to fly him to the sites, but he and I had decided to drive and to include in the trip visits to women's liberation and other movement groups. So he was busy coordinating his speaking engagements and I was working on setting up meetings within that schedule. Increasingly, we traveled and spoke together.

To un-celebrate the Fourth of July, Homer and I organized an event in Cambridge in which we would speak for the first time on the same platform in the Boston area, with Cell 16's approval.

Homer presented twenty slides. One of them showed him and his Vietnamese interpreter standing by the twisted hulk of a B-52 bomber; another showed them talking to women peasants in a rice field; the last picture was of the scowling American pilots he'd repatriated. Homer told a story with each of the slides. He showed the metal ring the Vietnamese had given him, made from a downed American warplane, and his rubber thongs made from the airplane tires. He was a good and very personal speaker; his voice cracked with emotion. The audience was quiet and clearly moved. Homer concluded by outlining the structure of male aggression and its translation into military aggression.

"The two are inseparable. What I saw in Vietnam was rape on a mass scale, paralleled here at home by violence against women. Without that underlying structure of patriarchy, no American male would be motivated to participate in the war."

Then it was my turn to speak; I shocked the audience to attention by reading a section of the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* on war—"the man getting

his big gun off." There was appreciative laughter and a woman yelled out, "Right on."

I concluded by saying, "Certainly it is imperative that we dedicate ourselves to ending this genocidal war. But at the same time, we must get to the root cause and transform the consciousness of the whole society. If not, within a decade or two, history will repeat itself with the same kind of war, or worse, nuclear war."

Not long after, Bernardine Dohrn came to town, having just returned from Cuba. I was anxious to hear about her experience. We entered a crowded, small office near Central Square where a dozen local activists had already gathered. It was a private and hastily assembled meeting. The scene was bizarre. Bernardine sat in front of the window, her booted legs crossed. She wore a see-through tank top that barely covered her ass — no skirt, no underwear. A half dozen young men surrounded her. They appeared to be kneeling but they were actually crouched on their haunches, to be below Bernardine's eye level it seemed. She smiled and swung her hair, then laughed, throwing her head back, all the time gazing down on the men. Then she flipped her wrist and they scattered. Several more men surrounded her. It occurred to me that she was parodying Scarlet O'Hara in the barbecue scene.

"I hope you're not going to grovel like that," I said to Homer.

"God it's embarrassing," he said. Just then, Bernardine caught sight of Homer and beckoned to him. He raised his hand, palm toward her, and shook his head. She shrugged and faked a pout.

Bernardine spoke. She and seven other SDS Weathermen had traveled to Cuba to meet with Vietnamese representatives.

"And that was far fucking out as usual, meeting the Vietnamese, but the real fucking trip was being in Cuba. Man let me tell you." I hardly recognized that woman as the same person I'd met in Abby's kitchen a few months before.

"First the message from the Vietnamese to comrades here: The Vietnamese say that the American war machine will never escape from the sea of fire of peoples' war. And that we American revolutionaries have

the responsibility to build an invincible movement to pressure the Americans to withdraw."

After hearty applause and fists in the air, Bernardine said, "Do you know what that means? It means that the collapse of the United States government is upon us. The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution. We're gonna kick ass, motherfuckers."

Bernardine talked about the revolutionary beauty of the Cuban people and described how the SDS group had set up a mechanism for activists from the United States to travel to Cuba to cut sugar cane, a project to be called the "Venceremos Brigade" which would begin in early 1970.

When the meeting ended, Bernardine walked directly to Homer and hugged him. She ignored me.

"Do you remember Roxanne from Abby's?" Homer asked. She glanced briefly at me without a sign of recognition or a word of greeting and sauntered off to talk to another man.

It was July 19, 1969, and everyone was excited about the news that astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were walking on the Moon. To me, the idea of U.S. military men on the Moon was scary rather than exciting, given what they were doing on planet Earth, and that the Moon trip was a military project. Another news item interested me more. While everyone gazed at the Moon on TV, Senator Edward Kennedy had been in a car wreck on Chappaquiddick Island. A woman in the car had drowned. Homer and I agreed that it was probably another CIA assassination plot.

In early August a few days before Homer and I were to leave on the coffeehouse tour, Dana and I met for lunch near Harvard Square to discuss the next issue of the journal. We walked back along Massachusetts Avenue to Central Square.

"Look," she said. Dana pointed to the screaming headline of the afternoon edition of the newspaper: "SATANIST MASSACRE IN HOLLYWOOD." We bought the newspaper and read the gruesome story about Charles Manson and his cult of mostly women followers.

"Somehow it seems like a signal of some bad times to come, maybe a tip of the iceberg of the craziness the war has engendered. This war is driving people crazy. We have a lot of work to do," I said.

"You'd better be careful in California," Dana said.

That afternoon, Cell 16 met at my place. The mood was tense. Abby said she wanted to withdraw from day-to-day involvement, and she wanted us to find a new office for which she would pay the rent. But she also said she was angry with me and felt that I was no longer centered on women's liberation. She said she disliked Homer's "omnipresence." She criticized my "pushy style."

"You never stop working. You push us all. I feel guilty if I take time to eat a good meal in a restaurant or go to a concert, that you're thinking I'm a bourgeois pig. Somehow your very *existence* makes me feel diminished as a human being," she said. Everyone was silent, uncomfortable.

"I accept your criticism of my style of work and I apologize for being so pushy. But what can I say to my very existence being offensive?" I said. Abby glared at me as if I were a stranger or an enemy.

"I think Roxanne's absence for a month will be good for us all, and good for Roxanne. We've been going full steam. Roxanne can do some thinking, and we can too. We must keep in mind that our core project is the journal, and we all work well together around that," Dana said.

Friday the 13th, August 1969. I suppressed superstition as Homer and I packed the VW bug with 100 copies of each of the two issues of the journal and stacks of New England Free Press pamphlets. We planned to finance our month-long, cross-country trip by selling our literature. The GI Coffee Houses Project, the brainchild of antiwar activists and first-generation SDS organizers, sponsored Homer's speaking tour. Coffeehouses had been established in towns near key military bases, and Homer was scheduled to speak at three of them: Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Columbia, South Carolina (near Fort Jackson); and Killeen, Texas (near Fort Hood).

The Fort Bragg coffeehouse occupied a converted storefront—cavernous, dim, humid, and smoky. And it was packed with off-duty, mostly

white soldiers who were in Special Forces training. A certain expectant tension filled the air. The fifty or so young men gathered had already begun to question the war, or they wouldn't have been there. Now they were trying to decide whether to desert, try for conscientious objector status, or go to the stockade. None of these were easy choices for teenage boys.

Homer was introduced, and the men settled down and listened intently. Perched on a bar stool at the counter drinking coffee, I could see the whole room. I watched the men's faces as Homer described the Vietnamese struggle, the nature of the war, and told personal stories.

The first question was: "What the hell are we supposed to do to get out of it?"

"I can't tell *you* what you should do, but if I were drafted I'd refuse to go. I would either go to Canada or to prison, probably prison. I know you all are in a different position. You are already in the military. You can refuse to go—like Captain Howard Levy—and face court-martial, or you can desert and go to Canada. Either one is better than dying, being maimed, or murdering peasants in an unjust war," Homer said.

"Are you opposed to all wars or just this one?" another man asked.

"I support the Vietnamese fighting against invasion. I think there are situations where there's no other choice, not as long as aggression exists," Homer said.

"So you're not one of them peaceniks?"

"I respect conscientious objectors. Actually, I probably am one of them peaceniks." Everyone laughed.

The Columbia, South Carolina coffeehouse served the GIs at nearby Fort Jackson. The first thing I noticed was that at least half the men were black and Latino, unlike Fort Bragg, where they all appeared to be white. The other speaker was Captain Howard Levy, an army doctor who was under court-martial, his sentence pending. Two years earlier Levy had refused to provide medical instruction to Green Berets, saying they were murderers killing old people and children, raping women—all poor peasants. Levy was a small, intense, bespectacled man in his early thirties.

Although there were hundreds of draft resisters and deserters, Levy was the first active serviceman publicly to refuse orders to go to Vietnam.

Levy exuded determination and commitment. I was impressed by his good humor and apparent lack of fear, his calmness and humility. He was being attacked not only for being a "traitor," but also for being Jewish.

After Homer and Howard finished speaking, a young soldier yelled out, "Hey, do we get free pussy if we desert?" He pointed to a poster on the wall that read "Girls Say Yes to Boys Who Say No," the popular draft resistance slogan. Laughter rippled through the room. Neither Levy nor Homer smiled. I sat in the front row of seats, my neck on fire. I wondered what the young movement women who worked in the coffeehouse were thinking.

Suddenly Homer said, "There's someone here to address that question," and he beckoned me forward. He whispered to Levy, who nodded enthusiastically.

"This is my comrade, Roxanne Dunbar. She is a leader of the new women's liberation movement in this country." To my surprise, there were more cheers than jeers, but the cheerers may have had a different interpretation of the word "liberation."

I rose from my chair and faced the men. I said to them that underlying support for war was institutionalized patriarchy, wherein men were told that they must fight to prove their manhood and that if they didn't change their consciousness about their attitudes toward women, they were supporting the war just as if they were there fighting. I told them that women wanted to be free and equal and not just mothers or sex objects, angels or whores.

The room fell silent as I spoke in my barely audible voice. When I finished the GLs applauded.

Homer then described how men oppressed women, and the best discussion on sexism I'd yet heard transpired. In fact, I had never before heard a group of men seriously discussing male supremacy. I was struck by the irony that these young men—black, white, Latino—from poor, rural, and blue-collar backgrounds were more open to women's liberation than the middle- and upper-class men in the antiwar movement.

Homer and Howard were surprised and pleased by the reaction. Homer went to the car and brought in copies of our literature.

"We'll speak together at Fort Hood. This is important," Homer said.

"No one knows better than soldiers the connection between male supremacy and war. If they refuse to be aggressive, they are labeled pussies or queers. They are raised for war. No wonder they hate and abuse women, and each other," I said.

Killeen was in the dead center of Texas, a hole-in-the-wall kind of town not much bigger than the one I grew up in. We drove into town at 8 A.M., so we had the whole day free, as Homer was to speak at the coffeehouse in the evening. The temperature crept toward a hundred degrees. Killeen was the nearest town to Fort Hood, the main training base for grunts sent directly to Vietnam. The main street sported a dozen businesses in dilapidated storefronts. One of them had been converted to the GI coffeehouse, surely by some braver people than I could ever aspire to be. On the window of the coffeehouse was a nicely made poster advertising the talk with a blown-up photograph of Homer surrounded by Vietnamese peasants. In that town, it looked like a "Wanted, Dead or Alive" poster.

The coffeehouse didn't open until 4 P.M. so there were no customers in the morning, only a university student volunteer from Austin. He called the director at home. Homer knew Jay Lockard from the civil rights movement. He described her as one of the bravest and hardest-working individuals he'd met in the movement. Homer had written Jay informing her that I would be with him and had sent her copies of the journal.

When Jay arrived, she eyed me critically, not in that way that women often competitively check each other out, but suspiciously, objectively. Homer introduced us and we shook hands. Jay did not smile. She pointed down the main street and told us she would join us at the town café for breakfast.

Tall, middle-aged cowboys who looked as if they'd already done a day's work—they were obviously local ranchers—occupied the café booths. Any one of them could have been my father or his brothers, which made

me more aware of the gap between Homer and me—I was certain that he had never met those kind of people. We sat at the counter.

"Jay is not going to like the idea of me talking about women's liberation," I said.

"You're probably right. We'll have to convince her," Homer said.

Jay strode in and straddled the stool next to Homer and began talking to him in a whisper I couldn't hear. I sensed nervous tension in Homer.

"Jay, Roxanne and I gave a presentation together in Columbia, and it worked really well," Homer said, his voice raised.

"Nobody is going to talk to my boys about women's lib," she said. Jay spoke plainly. I liked that about her. I was often confused and frustrated by movement organizers who behaved like public relations experts or diplomats, taking hours to say no. But I disliked Jay's proprietary attitude—I couldn't imagine saying "my women" in reference to the women's liberation movement.

We returned to the GI coffeehouse and began hours and hours of fruitless negotiations. Jay didn't budge an inch, and Homer didn't either. So we left. A year later Jay Lockard would be a full-time women's liberation organizer in the South.

Beyond our GI Coffee House gigs, Homer and I had set up meetings with antiwar, women's liberation, and other movement groups and friends in Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania, Louisville, Chapel Hill, New Orleans, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Seattle, Chicago, and Cleveland.

Marilyn and Lee Webb had set up speaking engagements for us in the D.C. area, and arranged for us to speak in Baltimore at a forum sponsored by the Baltimore Defense Committee, a group organized to defend political prisoners. Lee Webb had been a national SDS officer like Homer and now represented the *Guardian* newspaper; both he and Marilyn worked at the Institute for Policy Studies. Marilyn and I talked into the night. She was a member of the coordinating committee of D.C. Women's Liberation. She told me about the proliferation of women's groups and

projects in Washington, D.C. I was relieved to find that Marilyn had changed her views during the past months and now considered women's liberation central. No movement woman had tried harder to persuade radical men to incorporate women's liberation, and she had been shunned and even threatened for her efforts. We agreed that there were two major challenges within women's liberation—how to incorporate new recruits and how to work collectively.

"I've been singled out by the media as a leader so I get all the calls to speak and the women accuse me of trying to speak for the whole group, of being a star," she said.

"I have exactly the same problem. I think Cell 16 is about ready to kick me out. At first, I thought it was a class problem, of women being programmed to be jealous of each other. But I think it has more to do with women reacting to male domination. They didn't come to women's liberation to experience the same thing from women. I feel helpless in the face of their accusations, but I don't know what I would do in their place," I said.

Finding out that my situation was part of a larger problem that others were having allowed me to take it less personally and to begin to view it in a larger context. Actually, this "anti-leaderism" would ultimately reduce the effectiveness of many highly motivated women in the movement, and it unfortunately became a sort of Achilles' heel.

We also visited one of the leading theorists of the women's liberation movement, Beverly Jones, who had recently moved from Florida to Hershey, Pennsylvania, that strange company town where the streetlights were shaped like Hershey "kisses," and the cooking chocolate perfumed the air. In early 1968, Beverly and Judith Brown had written and circulated the first theoretical women's liberation paper, "Toward a Female Liberation Movement," which I had read for the first time when I met Judith at the Sandy Springs conference.

Beverly was married to a former Florida professor who had recently moved from Gainesville to the university in Hershey. She was a small, middle-aged woman who exuded self-confidence. An affluent housewife

and mother of teenagers, she looked the role. I found it difficult to associate the woman before me with the militant feminist of her writings. Beverly and Judith had vehemently insisted, unlike Cell 16, that "men, all men, are the enemy of women, not just a system of male supremacy." They had urged women to live in all-female communes, to learn self-defense, and to practice celibacy for long periods. Yet both Judith and Beverly were happily married and lived traditional lifestyles. I had been fascinated that two women in Florida had been creating a set of ideas almost identical with two women in Boston—Dana and me—at exactly the same time. Now I was astonished.

Beverly and I talked late into the night and rose early to continue our conversation. She was delightful, intelligent, and funny. I was encouraged that a middle-class housewife could think so radically, yet I was also profoundly unsettled by the gap between her rhetoric and her reality. I thought that perhaps Beverly and other armchair radical feminists perceived me and other action-oriented women as dispensable shock troops—outlaws—on the feminist frontier.

As Homer and I drove through Appalachia, I said: "Bev's talk about innate biological differences between women and men bothers me; I mean she thinks biology is unchangeable and determines behavior."

"It's certainly an easy way out for men to believe that; then they don't have to change," Homer said.

I detected all theories of biological determinism in terms of human behavior. What I feared was that this aspect of thought in women's liberation could become a vehicle to affirm a lot of socially constructed debilitating female behavior, rather than freeing women to become strong and empowered to change and transform the world.

We drove a long time in silence, passing through the blight of Appalachian rural poverty. News of Woodstock played on the radio: for a hundred miles in every direction, traffic blocked the roads in upstate New York—a half million young people were on their way to Woodstock to sing and dance. A state of emergency was declared but not one incident of violence had yet occurred.

"Maybe we should have gone north instead of south," I said. We had discussed going to Woodstock but I'd had my share of human be-ins in California. Yet Woodstock sounded different, important.

"Ugh, how decadent in the middle of war and chaos," Homer said. Homer didn't like rock music; he was loyal to folk and blues.

"People have to find ways to keep from going nuts. It's not so easy to find the movement, you know." I always reminded Homer of the cliquishness of the movement and how difficult it was for me to feel accepted within it.

"Woodstock just sounds like self-indulgence to me," he said.

"You sound like an old fuddy-duddy at twenty-seven," I said.

Anne Braden had arranged for us to speak to the SCEF staff in Louisville, Kentucky. Anne and Carl Braden, as a part of the 1950s southern civil rights movement, had founded SCEF—the Southern Conference Education Fund. It was unusual in its emphasis on the working class and bringing black and white workers together to fight racism and strengthen labor power. The SCEF newspaper, the *Southern Patriot*, had long been a singular organizing tool in the South.

The Braden home was on the West Side in a working-class district of boxy frame houses and clipped lawns. Anne and Carl had been instrumental in integrating the neighborhood back in the 1950s when they bought and resold a house to a black couple. Carl was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for the deed, and Anne had faced similar charges. They fought the rap and won.

"Come on in and make yourselves at home." Anne cradled a telephone receiver under her chin, and held a cigarette in one hand, a pen in the other. The living room was tiny, every sitting space piled with papers and books. A movement house. We went upstairs where the SCEF and the *Southern Patriot* office operated in a crowded attic room. A large white-haired man was typing. Homer introduced me to Carl Braden, Anne's husband.

The meeting that evening was held in the home of another married

couple, Joe and Karen, who were SCEF staffers. Karen worked with coal miners and their families on a "black lung disease" (emphysema caused by inhaling coal dust) project. Joe had resisted the draft and faced a prison sentence, now on appeal. Thirty or so activists—most of them locals from working-class backgrounds, both black and white—came to the meeting.

Homer started off by describing the purpose of his trip to Hanoi and his experiences in Vietnam. As he spoke, I scanned the faces of each person there, wondering how they would respond to what I had to say. I very much wanted their respect and love, but I intended to say exactly what I thought.

I began by reading parts of the Casey Hayden and Mary King 1965 internal SNCC memo on women as a caste. I was certain they all admired those two brave white women who had worked so hard and long in dangerous circumstances in the South. Then I elaborated on the caste and class thesis I had developed. "I think all movement organizations should give women's liberation a priority on their agendas, and not simply as a means to recruit women to the peace and civil rights movement, but also to encourage them to form or join women's liberation groups. I don't think it's sufficient for women to simply get involved, or to join the workforce. That's happened in every revolution and movement of the twentieth century, yet women are little more liberated now than they were a century ago, and the world is on the brink of annihilation. Patriarchy has never before been challenged. That's what women's liberation is about."

My statement provoked an extended discussion. They all worried that they might alienate working-class people, black and white, by questioning the institution of the family and by organizing women first or separately. And because several of them worked with coal miners, they were wary of offending workingmen. Mother Jones's name was invoked.

Homer chimed in, saying, "I agree with Roxanne. Until I met her, even though I'd always promoted women's leadership in SDS and civil rights projects, and even though I hated male chauvinism, I didn't understand the significance of the structures of patriarchy and their relationship with war and racism, or even how to make a successful social revolution."

The discussion continued until midnight. Later, lying beside Homer in Joe and Karen's guest room, I felt like the luckiest person in the world. I was a part of history in the making. I felt that the liberation of women was the key to revolutionary change, and if people like the SCEF organizers would take it on, the first true revolution could be launched and won.

In New Orleans, we met the local SCEF staff. Anne had arranged for us to stay with Ed and Lou, a young couple who distributed the *Southern Patriot* in the Gulf region. Ed was a British writer who had come to the United States to report on the Mississippi Freedom Riders in 1961 and had never left. Lou was from an old New Orleans family and had rejected the role of the southern belle. They lived on the ground floor of a sprawling three-story colonial-style frame house. They said the house had once been elegant, but like others on the edge of the well-kept Garden District, it now had peeling paint and rotting porches. The district was called the Irish Channel, but mostly Central Americans and Cubans now populated it. Behind the house was a tangled garden. The whole place felt more Caribbean than North American.

Although we'd been driving all day and it was late when we arrived, Lou and Ed showed us around the house and then whisked us off to party. We danced, drank, ate shrimp and oysters, walked, and talked in the French Quarter all night long. It seemed that no one slept in New Orleans—it was Wednesday night and the streets were filled with people laughing, talking, and partying. We ended the spree at dawn with chicory coffee and sizzling, square doughnuts called *beignets* in the Café du Monde on the riverfront.

I woke at 9 A.M.—it was much too hot to sleep—and stumbled out of the bedroom to find both Ed and Lou typing.

"Do you ever sleep?" I asked.

Homer joined us. After Ed prepared strong chicory coffee and an English breakfast, they put us to work licking envelopes, answering the telephone, and typing, as if we had been there forever.

Forty-eight hours later, Homer and I decided we wanted to move to

New Orleans to do our movement work. I suspected that Anne had had that in mind when she sent us there, because Lou and Ed immediately embraced our idea and had plans for us. The flat on the second floor of the house was going to be available in December and they would secure it for us. I told them my dream of establishing a women's liberation office somewhere in the South or Southwest. It all seemed too good to be true.

We left New Orleans and drove west through the bayous of Cajun country, studying what would soon be our new home.

"This trip is a miracle. I feel as if I've been in one of those the National Liberation Front tunnels, yet moving through the underground of the United States where angels live, building a new society that will rise up one day and be the whole society," I said.

"It's true. You can now go any place in the United States and always find at least two or three activists. You'll always have a place to stay and work all over the country. That's what this beloved community is all about. It didn't exist only during Mississippi Summer, it's a permanent reality," Homer said.

Homer had arranged to meet Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez in Albuquerque to recruit her for a delegation to Hanoi. "Betita," as her friends call her, had been a writer and mainstream New York editor when she joined SNCC to coordinate the New York office. She had published two books—*Letters from Mississippi*, about Mississippi Summer, and *The Youngest Revolution*, about Cuba. Betita and Maria Varela, who were the only Latinas in SNCC, had moved to northern New Mexico to support the Hispanic land grant movement that erupted in August 1967. Betita lived two hours north of Albuquerque in Española, where she published a Chicano movement newspaper, *El Grito del Norte* [*The Cry of the North*]. She was going to be in Albuquerque to cover the trial of some Chicano activists.

I had studied the history of the Southwest and had followed the news accounts of the 1967 armed conflict in northern New Mexico, the famous "Courthouse Raid" led by Reies Tijerina. A dozen northern New Mexico

farmers had seized the county courthouse in the tiny mountain town of Tierra Amarilla, northwest of Santa Fe. They were protesting trespass charges that had been brought against fellow farmers. The feds responded with Huey helicopter gunships and the 82nd Airborne, which galvanized mass Hispanic protests. I had been thrilled to hear about this farmers' direct-action movement. It reminded me of my grandfather's Wobbly days.

The scene at the Albuquerque courthouse was chaotic. An equal number of shouting demonstrators and riot-equipped police crowded the steps and sidewalks. Inside, the halls were clogged with more demonstrators and police. Homer spotted Betita and pushed through the crowd to her. At first, she struck me as a film director at work, trying to create order out of chaos. She exuded an air of authority. After giving Homer a brief hug and shaking my hand, Betita zipped in and out of the crowd and finally disappeared into the bowels of the court building.

We milled around the courthouse with the demonstrators, waiting. I was impressed with the size and energy of the largely young and Hispanic crowd, sprinkled with Hispanic farmers in overalls. "Basta" and "Viva Tijerina" and "Lucha por la tierra" adorned picket signs. Finally, at 4 p.m., the proceedings in the courtroom ended, and Betita joined us for a few minutes to give us directions to her home in Española.

I had never been in the heartland of the ancient Pueblo Indian and Hispanic rural culture of northern New Mexico, so the drive north through Santa Fe and on to Española was exciting and interesting—there were irrigated plots, clusters of dark adobe houses around picture-postcard adobe churches, with the scenes framed by looming glacier-capped peaks on the western, northern, and eastern horizons. It felt like Mexico. Betita's house at the northern edge of Española was an old rambling adobe surrounded by an adobe wall.

As in all movement houses, it was impossible to carry on a conversation for more than a few minutes, as people constantly came and went, many with problems that Betita discussed with them and got on the telephone to resolve. The telephone rang constantly. We talked more with Betita's companion than with her. Rees was a former steel worker from

East Chicago, Indiana. He had left assembly-line work to try to make it as a writer. He got a job as a reporter on the *Albuquerque Journal* around the time the "courthouse raid" broke into a major national news story. Then he met Betita, and she recruited him to work on *El Grito*.

Late at night, when the phone rang less and no one came to visit, we finally talked with Betita. To my surprise, she was enthusiastic about women's liberation and had even been writing on the subject. She knew about Cell 16 and had read the journal.

"Have you seen this yet?" Betita handed me the new issue of SDS's *New Left Notes*, with a picture of nine women, including Bernadine, captioned: "The Motor City 9." I read it and flinched.

Last week nine women—now the Motor City Nine—walked into a classroom at McComb Community College and barricaded the doors. Inside they interrupted the students writing final exams to talk about the most important things going on in the world today—things that teachers at McComb College never mention or only lie about. They rapped about the war in Vietnam and about how the Vietnamese women carry on armed struggle together with Vietnamese men against U.S. imperialism . . . When they began to talk about how women are kept down in this country, two men got up to leave the room. It is reported that the Motor City Nine responded to such an exhibition of male chauvinism and general pig behavior by attacking the men with karate and prevented them from leaving the room. They then continued to discuss how women are used as slave labor in the household, exploited on the labor market, and turned into sexual objects . . . The Motor City Nine are part of the Women's Liberation Movement. They understand that the road to women's liberation is not through personal discussions about the oppression of women; nor is it through an appeal to the public conscience through demonstrations or guerrilla theater about the issue of female liberation. It will only come when women act, not only around the issues of women's liberation, but

when they act on other issues such as the war and racism. Women's liberation will come when women exercise real power—as is done in Vietnam and in the McComb College classroom.

"Why do they say they are a part of the women's liberation movement when they don't approve of our existence?" I said.

"Sounds like a male idea of what women's liberation should be," Betita said. Then she said, "Roxanne, I understand you're from Oklahoma and you're part Indian."

"I didn't grow up in an Indian community. I grew up in a poor white farming community. My mother may have been part Indian, I don't know."

"Do you know much about Indians?" Rees asked.

"Where I grew up there were Indians all around and I know the history of how their land was expropriated. I actually know more about Indians in Mexico than in the United States."

"The Pueblo Indians here are more like those in Mexico because they were conquered by the Spanish and they're hostile to the Hispanic land grant struggle. We really want their support, but except for a few individuals who have no official standing, they refuse to even discuss it with us," Betita said.

"Do the Hispanics support the Pueblo Indians' struggles?" I asked.

"The Pueblos are not receptive to Hispanic support," Rees said.

"Why don't you all move here and work with us? Roxanne, you could get to know the Pueblos and help build unity," she said.

I was flattered and tempted to take Betita up on the offer. I knew that she—and New Mexico—could teach me a great deal.

My South African friend David was still living in Berkeley, now in an anarchist commune. When we drove up, Al Kooper's music was blasting from the house. David's rust-colored hair had grown to a huge reddish Afro, which accentuated how thin he'd become. As he gave us a tour of the neighborhood, he told us the story of Peoples Park from the point of

view of a "street fighter," as the young men who threw rocks at police called themselves.

Earlier that year, a group of street people, students, and radicals had occupied a square block of university property, claiming it as "liberated territory," and renaming it "Peoples Park." They camped there and began to plant gardens and set up children's play areas. In mid-May the Berkeley police and the California Highway Patrol—on orders from Governor Reagan, who deployed them as storm troopers—had beaten the park residents as they planted grass and flowers. Violent conflict between demonstrators and police continued for nearly three weeks. One hundred and fifty demonstrators had been wounded by police bullets and one bystander was killed. The police pulled back when 30,000 people marched in protest.

Now, two months later, the resistance hadn't died. The smell of tear gas hung in the air from the day before when police had thrown canisters into rowdy crowds, David among them. His eyes were still swollen and red, and he had a terrible cough. He said that tear gas had become a normal part of life on Telegraph Avenue and the surrounding area. It looked like a war zone—broken, boarded-up shop windows, debris in the streets, heavily armed and flak-jacketed police everywhere.

The only plate-glass windows on the avenue that had been spared belonged to Cody's Bookstore. A group of anti-Shah Iranians sat on a carpet outside the store, serving tea from a samovar, their leader speaking of revolution. There were hordes of outrageously attired young people who had come from all over the country, even from other countries, to join the revolution. Young Black Panthers hawked their newspaper on street corners. Chanting Hare Krishnas with shaved heads, wearing long pink gowns, snaked through the crowds. The smell of marijuana mingled with stinging tear gas. The police had surrounded Peoples Park to prevent another rumored takeover. Young masked street fighters hurled insults and rocks. They wore crash helmets and taunted the police. The atmosphere was electric and scary.

Homer called Tom Hayden, and soon we were cruising around in his

convertible with the top down, David and I in the backseat. Anne Weills sat in the front, in between Homer and Tom. Anne had started the first women's group in the Bay Area the year before. She had been married to Robert Scheer, one of the founders of the monthly radical magazine, *Ramparts*, but they had divorced and now Tom was living with her and her young son. Anne had been on the delegation with Homer to Vietnam, and she had gone on to visit Korea and also China at the height of the Cultural Revolution; very few foreigners had been to China in recent years, and I was excited to hear about it from her.

Tom was awaiting trial with other movement leaders for conspiracy charges stemming from the Chicago police riot at the Democratic Convention. After the car tour, we went to lunch in a second-floor café from which we had a bird's-eye view of Telegraph Avenue, and we watched anarchy and repression in motion.

Tom looked different from the image I had of him from television and newspapers wherein he appeared to be a clean-cut politician. Now his hair was below his ears and he wore surplus army garb. He was excited about Peoples Park and anxious to tell Homer his war stories in detail. Then he talked about his trial, which was to start in Chicago in two weeks.

"You're not working on the trial?" Tom asked Homer.

"I've been organizing around the trip to Hanoi," Homer said, shifting his gaze to Anne, who had said little. Anne was a tall, willowy, blue-eyed blond. She wore sloppy jeans, a sweatshirt, no makeup, and still looked like a beauty queen. She and Homer discussed what they'd been doing since returning—she had done little else than work on Tom's trial—and she told us about China and Korea.

Later, in Anne's home a few blocks from the street scene, she told me that she knew about Cell 16. She said she and the other women in her group were studying martial arts, too. I gave her copies of the journal—she hadn't seen it.

A very young woman knocked and came in. Tom introduced us to Joey. She and Tom discussed some papers she had brought him. Joey was running a project Tom had started, the "Berkeley Liberation School." We

would stay in her small apartment near campus and learn about the "liberated territory" of Berkeley.

Joey had transferred to Berkeley the year before from San Diego State in her junior year, but had not registered for her last year so she could work on the Liberation School full time and go with the second Venceremos Brigade to Cuba in February.

I detected the trace of a southern accent in Joey's speech and asked her where she was from.

"I grew up in San Diego. My father was in the navy, but my parents are both from Oklahoma City, and all my relations still live there," she said.

"What do you know? A sister Okie. I'm from Oklahoma, too," I said.

"Do you ever think about going back there to organize?" she asked.

"I have, but it would be hard with all the bigotry and fundamentalism. Homer and I are moving to New Orleans at the end of the year, so I'm getting closer," I said.

"I don't know if I could live in Oklahoma, but I think it's important we get out of these movement ghettos and into the heart of the country. With the Liberation School, we're trying to develop a cadre of trained organizers to do just that," she said.

"How did you meet Tom?" Homer asked.

"Behind a barricade dodging pig bullets in May," she laughed. "I've learned so much from him. I'm only twenty-one, and Peoples Park was a real baptism by fire for me."

Joey took us to a political education class, then to a poster workshop and a karate class. I was impressed with their Liberation School and with Joey.

"Maybe you can come down to New Orleans and help us set up a Liberation School there," I said.

"We'll see. I know I want to travel around the country," she said.

"Are you involved in women's liberation?" I asked.

"Well, I don't want to offend you, and I don't really know your work, but I don't think it's for me," she said. I gave her a copy of the second journal.

The next morning Tom met Homer and me for breakfast.

"Sorry to be so busy with the trial and life. I share child care and love it. I hope Joey got things right. She's okay for a groupie."

A *groupie*! Later that day, I wrote an angry essay that would become an article for the next issue of the journal and named it "Sexual Liberation"—More of the Same Thing," about pornography and about "groupies."

What do these girls want? What are they after? Actually, most (at least in the beginning) want to learn, want to be independent, want to be revolutionaries. No matter what they learn, they are still groupies unless they win the favor of a single man; then they are so-and-so's woman. These males express utter contempt for the single women who relate to them . . . A young man, relating to a male leader, is considered a disciple, "a real revolutionary when he gets his shit together." Females who try to have this same relationship with male leaders are put down as groupies. The groupie ends up teaching the man more than he teaches her, but she receives no credit for it

Returning east on the northern route, we stayed three days in Chicago, my first time there. I called Naomi Weisstein, a veteran SDS activist who had started one of the first women's liberation groups, and she got members of the group together for a meeting at her house.

I was awed by the two dozen women gathered around me in Naomi's living room, women whose writings on women's liberation I'd read—not only Naomi but also Jo Freeman, a civil rights activist and historian, and Heather Booth, a Mississippi Summer veteran and early SDS member. There was an overwhelming aura of power and camaraderie in the room. They wanted to hear about me, about Cell 16, Valerie Solanas, our journal, the conference we'd organized. And they told me about their visions and work.

They had galvanized around protesting the firing of Marlene Dixon, who had been a professor in sociology at the University of Chicago. She had since taken a university position in Montreal. The women were

nearly all academics and they were developing women's history and women's studies courses. I felt that what they were doing was going to be crucial for the future of the women's movement.

Homer had set up meetings with his many movement friends. Uptown Chicago, a poor white ghetto of Appalachian migrants, had been the location of one of the SDS poverty projects. Some of the young Appalachian men had started a Black Panther clone group they called the "Young Patriots." We wanted to meet them. It was a week before the Chicago Seven's conspiracy trial, and all the movement people were gearing up for demonstrations at the federal courthouse.

Uptown Chicago was run-down. Gerry, an old friend of Homer's, walked us through the streets. She knew everyone.

"Unemployment here is 50 percent; everyone else is on welfare. The cops detest these people they call hillbillies. And the older people have no hope. They just want to go back home, but they were starving there."

Gerry took us into a pool hall filled with young white men who wore their hair in ducktails and pompadours. They all knew her.

"They're great kids, but there's no work for them. They've all dropped out of school," Gerry said.

"Are they in the Patriots?" Homer asked.

"They're getting organized. Their leader is Preacherman. I wish you could meet him, but he's out of town. The kids patrol in groups to keep an eye on the cops. And they really look up to the Black Panthers, especially Fred Hampton. He loves these poor white kids." Fred Hampton was a twenty-one-year-old local black man who had worked on the assembly line at International Harvester, where he was a union shop steward. He quit his job to set up the Black Panther chapter in Chicago.

"Can we meet Fred Hampton?" I asked.

"He's so busy with Bobby Seale's conspiracy case, I doubt he'd take time off. Come back when things aren't so crazy." We would not have another chance to meet Fred Hampton. Three months later, the Chicago police invaded his home in the middle of the night and murdered him while he slept in his bed with his wife, his children in the next room.

That fall of 1969 back in Cambridge, I found that Cell 16 had flourished in my absence. The third issue of the journal was well under way. The theme was "The Dialectics of Sexism." Hannah had already designed the cover. Dana, Betsy, and several of the newer members, including Lisa, a high school student, had written good pieces—there were nineteen authors in all.

Soon we rented an office, and that gave all of us a sense of our group's identity and seriousness—our first real office, not my flat nor Abby's basement, but an office in blue-collar Sommerville, the next township over from Cambridge. Abby paid the rent and had done much of the work fixing it up. Once a corner grocery store, it had big glass double doors. Inside, the space retained no hints of its past occupants. The wood floors smelled of fresh varnish, and fluorescent lights hung from the high ceilings. Two ornate, silver-painted radiators provided heat.

I established a routine, going to the office every morning and working late into the evening, typing and laying out the articles. Student volunteers came after their classes to help with the journal mail orders, which were overwhelming. I had been away for a month, and returned to find that Cell 16 and the journal were "hot." Copies of our journal and long worktables for packing and mailing them occupied most of the space in our new office.

Dozens of high school and college students worked on mailing the journal and distributing leaflets. The most interesting volunteer was Jennifer, a graduate student at Brandeis, originally from Mobile, Alabama. Jennifer worked in the office most afternoons, and she worked hard. Her long, naturally wavy auburn hair was obviously her crowning glory, and she wore heavy makeup. I teased her, saying we had an anti-beauty code. She responded good-naturedly and laughed easily. Soon we agreed that Jennifer would join us in New Orleans to help in the new office while she completed her dissertation, "Crime and the Sociopathic Personality."

The media blitz centering on me appeared to have died down, and I felt comfortable with the group and the new recruits. When I told them about my plan to set up a branch of Cell 16 in New Orleans they were

supportive, and Abby agreed to finance the project. I saw my move to New Orleans as branching out, rather than as a break with Cell 16.

Homer worked on the *Ole Mole* newspaper nearly all the time he wasn't driving the cab. I helped with the all-night layout sessions every two weeks. Homer and I had been nearly inseparable during the seven months we'd been together, but I was beginning to hunger for the independence I'd enjoyed before meeting him. After a number of discussions, I insisted that Homer and I occupy separate rooms, and my tiny room off the kitchen with its elevated bed and a desk became my retreat. I had no desire for intimacy, not with Homer, not with anyone. I explained to him how I felt and that I wanted us to change the nature of our relationship from lovers who worked together to comrades who worked together, to take sex out of the equation. He accepted my decision.

I wasn't certain how Homer really felt about the changes I initiated, but naturally it was harder for him to be on the receiving end of a forced decision. I was ecstatic and felt freer than I had ever felt in my life. The New England autumn was magical. When the new journal went to press in early October, I traveled around New England, sometimes with Homer, sometimes alone or with other women from our group, speaking and meeting with groups, and quite often at the University of New Hampshire, where I helped establish a women's group.

Dr. Patricia Robinson visited, along with several young African Americans from the housing project where Pat lived and worked. We had been corresponding for a year but we hadn't yet met. The new issue of the journal contained her long article, "A Historical and Critical Essay for Black Women of the Cities." Pat was African American and a psychiatrist from a family of longtime civil rights activists—Dr. W.E.B. DuBois had been a close friend of her parents. She lived in New Rochelle, New York, and worked with poor black women and their children in a housing project.

During the second week of October 1969, Weatherman began their "Four Days of Rage" to protest the Chicago 7 trial. Homer returned from working on the *Ole Mole* to tell me that he'd talked to friends in Chicago who said that only 200 people—they had expected a thou-

sand—had responded to Weatherman's call. First, they blew up the police memorial in Haymarket Square in Chicago. Then they showed up in gas masks, goggles, and helmets, carrying sticks, chains, blackjacks, lead pipes, and Mace. The women, led by Bernardine Dohrn, were in the vanguard. They ran through the streets of the affluent Chicago Gold Coast chanting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, dare to struggle, dare to win. Bring the war home. Off the pigs." They threw bricks through windows of cars and buildings, shoving people off sidewalks. Police in riot gear faced off with them and demonstrators plowed into a police line. All but a few of them made it through and continued rampaging. A thousand uniformed police and others in plainclothes came after them, pummeling the ones they caught and anyone else who happened to be around. The police used live ammunition but no one was shot.

The following days brought more news of Weatherman actions in Chicago. Over 2,000 National Guardsmen were called in and were issued live ammunition. But Weatherman went on another rampage downtown, breaking windows and pushing Saturday shoppers. More than half of them were arrested. For the first time, SDS became a household word.

"This will be the new measuring stick for radicalism," I said to Homer. I was concerned about the fate of women's liberation if I was right.

Soon after the Chicago demonstrations and the murder of Chicago Black Panther leader, Fred Hampton, one of Homer's old SDS friends from Swarthmore called and wanted to talk with him alone. Homer insisted that I be present. We knew his friend was with Weatherman. She arrived, obviously nervous.

"I must talk to you alone," she said to Homer. She appeared distraught, trembling.

"Roxanne and I work together. We share everything."

She launched into a thinly veiled code language trying to convince Homer, and then me as well, to come to their "National War Council," to be held before Christmas. She wanted Homer to help build the underground. We said no, that we did not agree with the idea and did not agree with Weatherman's views of women's liberation. Homer cried when she

left, saying it was because he was worried about his friends, but I thought he also regretted not going with them. We both shared Homer's friend's desperation over the war, and soon the nature of that war would become obvious to a larger public than ever before.

On November 13, 1969, journalist Seymour Hersh broke the My Lai massacre story, nearly two years after the event. Lt. William L. "Rusty" Calley had been quietly charged in September 1969 with 109 murders of "Oriental Human Beings." Soon, others were charged. But the magnitude and significance of the massacre had been camouflaged. I'd heard about the massacre during the summer of 1968—the army photographer who'd witnessed the massacre was already talking then. I hadn't been surprised because I'd been hearing about such massacres from GIs who participated in them since 1965. The My Lai trials made it seem like a unique event, rather than what it was: the very nature of the Vietnam War.

Hersh quoted one of the soldiers in the company: "They simply shot up this village and Calley was the leader of it. When one guy refused to do it, Calley took the rifle away and did the shooting himself."

Another soldier told Hersh: "They just marched through shooting everybody . . . they had them in a group standing in front of a ditch, just like a Nazi-type thing. One officer ordered a kid to machine-gun everybody down. But the kid just couldn't do it. He threw the machine gun down and the officer picked it up. . . . I don't remember seeing many men in the ditch, mostly women and kids."

Once Hersh's story broke the silence, the broadcast television news joined the cause. On the evening news, Walter Cronkite showed the army photographs I'd heard about—piles of bodies, bleeding children, the faces of women seconds before they were murdered. Mike Wallace interviewed one of the soldiers who told of lining up villagers and shooting them. Wallace asked why he did it.

"Why did I do it? Because I felt like I was ordered to do it, and it seemed like that at the time. I felt like I was doing the right thing, because I'd lost buddies," the soldier said.

"How do you shoot babies?" Wallace asked

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"I don't know. It's just one of them things," the soldier said.

Wallace asked what the Vietnamese villagers said or did during the massacre. "They were begging and saying, No. No. And mothers were hugging their children, but they kept on firing. Well, we kept on firing. They was waving their arms and begging."

The soldier's mother was interviewed and said, "He wasn't raised up like that. I raised him up to be a good boy and I did everything I could. They come along and took him to the service. He fought for his country and look what they done to him—made a murderer out of him, to start with."

"Normal boys," the newspapers kept characterizing the soldiers at My Lai. "Something went wrong."

Double veterans: That was the term the GIs used for raping a Vietnamese girl or woman and then murdering her. I combed the newspapers and found that rape was routine during the massacre, and not simple rape—sodomy rape, mutilation, vaginas ripped open with bayonets. A soldier killed one woman by ramming his rifle barrel up her vagina and firing. Ten- and twelve-year-old girls had been raped and mutilated. And not just by simple shooting or stabbing, but also by multiple stabs after the victim was dead, limbs severed, heads cut off, scalped, tongues cut out. There were reports of GIs' wives, mothers, and girlfriends receiving some of those ghoulsh souvenirs through the mail from their beloved boys. Madness. It had to be stopped, by any means necessary.

Yet I was happy organizing locally and regionally, and looked forward to doing the same in the South. But then, in November, the publicity machine started up again, and once again I found myself singled out as a "leader." In the November 21, 1969, issue of *Time* magazine, an article appeared, "The New Feminists: Revolt Against 'Sexism.'" The Diane Arbus photo of me practicing Tae Kwan Do was reprinted and captioned: "Cell 16's Roxanne Dunbar: Collision with realities. Declares Boston's Roxanne Dunbar, one of the movement's few acknowledged leaders: 'Sex is just a commodity.'"

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The day after the *Time* story came out, I received an invitation from the organizers of the First Congress to Unite Women to be a plenary speaker. It was to be held in New York. Being added at the last minute reflected the power of the media to determine who was considered a "leader." After talking it over with the group, I accepted, but we had an idea about what we would do with my allotted time.

Hannah, Judy, Dana, Jennifer, Jeanne, and I went to the Congress. After we checked into one large, filthy room in the Chelsea Hotel—where Valerie Solanas had lived for a time—we discussed what we would do, seeking a shocking idea that would also raise consciousness. We knew that ABC News would be taping the entire evening for a feature broadcast and we wanted to do something dramatic.

"The most shocking thing would be to challenge the cool chick image. Long hair is the crux of that image. It revolves around hair," Dana said.

"I think you're right. When I cut my hair this summer I felt liberated from male definitions of who I am or should be," Hannah said.

"How about cutting my hair, and Jennifer's?" I said. Only the two of us still had long hair. Mine had grown out since I'd cut it in the spring of 1968. Jennifer had long, sleek hair and agreed to have it cut. We selected Jeanne, our ginger-haired, six-foot-tall anarchist, to play barber.

When our turn came, the six of us marched onto the stage. Our only props were a chair and the Woolworth's scissors we'd bought. We each spoke, giving testimony about how we had once catered to movement and counterculture men's demands that we have long hair and wear miniskirts. As we talked, the thousand or so all-female audience fell silent. Dana explained what we were going to do and why. I went first. Gasps

alternated with silence as Jeanne chopped off my hair. Then Jennifer's turn came. Jean cut a hunk off Jennifer's beautiful hair and a woman shouted, "Stop, don't do it," and others shouted, "No, no."

"Men tell us to wear long hair, and we buy it," Dana yelled into the microphone.

"Men like my breasts, too. Do you want to cut them off?" a woman shouted.

Jeanne finished her work. We filed off stage to equal volleys of shouts and applause. The negative reaction by many of the women amazed us. We'd done it to raise consciousness and to amuse but had had no idea our action would be met with such anger. Many women gathered around us to thank us, but other women told us that they felt we had trivialized women's liberation and reduced it to a matter of style.

"Women are socialized to be good girls and ladies, to never make fools of ourselves. Women are defined by style and we must subvert male and society's definition," I said.

Others seemed to consider long hair as a body part. One woman hugged Jennifer and stroked her shorn hair.

"It's only hair. It'll grow out again," Jennifer said.

A woman from the ABC crew announced over the microphone that their film was missing. We were told that one of the organizers (later identified as Rita Mae Brown), apparently with the approval of the others, had snatched the film and run three blocks to the Hudson River to throw it in. Women's liberation, it was thought, would have an "image" problem if the hair-cutting exercise appeared on national television.

It seemed we were scandalous to what was becoming mainstream women's liberation; we were an outlaw faction, trapped somewhere between the mainstream and the embarrassing Weatherwomen.

On the heels of the *Time* feature, the December 12, 1969, issue of *Life* magazine published an article: "An 'Oppressed Majority' Demands Its Rights," by Sara Davidson, the writer I had refused to talk to in June:

Female Liberation is a tight-knit fiercely committed and clannish group which includes Abby Rockefeller, daughter of David Rockefeller, chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank, and Roxanne Dunbar, who grew up on a poor white farm in the South and has been writing and lecturing on women's liberation for more than six years.

I worried about the direction of women's liberation with the mainstream media selecting leaders, especially when, in the midst of news of the My

Lai massacre, *Time* magazine published a photograph of Gloria Steinem with Henry Kissinger, captioned:

Occasionally, he turns up with Gloria Steinem, the smashing-looking Gucci liberal who writes for *New York Magazine*. "He's terribly intelligent and funny," says Gloria. "He really understood Bobby Kennedy, and that made me know he was not Dr. Strangelove."

Kissinger! I was furious — Kissinger, who had published a book on nuclear war that claimed, "With proper tactics, nuclear war need not be as destructive as it appears." Kissinger, whose Vietnam strategy for "bringing the American boys home" was to bomb Vietnam back to the Stone Age. Kissinger, whose hands dripped blood.

Gloria Steinem was being promoted by the New York liberal media establishment as the model for the women's liberation movement. Later, in 1972, Clay Felker, who had founded *New York* magazine and bought the *Village Voice*, would set Steinem up with the "official" magazine of the women's liberation movement, *Ms.* magazine.

The lines were drawn. If that was feminism, I preferred being an outlaw. But I strongly believed that those of us with the class-based, anti-imperialist and anti-racist strategy for the women's liberation movement would prevail.

VI

REVOLUTION IN THE AIR

HOMER AND I moved to New Orleans in January 1970. We rented most of the second floor of the rambling old wooden house where Ed and Lou lived on the first floor. Off the two main rooms, a door led outside onto a long wooden balcony onto which three small rooms opened, once the servants' quarters. The balcony overlooked the garden, which was clogged with bougainvillea and fig, banana, magnolia, and bamboo trees. Winter did not exist in New Orleans.

The apartment was bare, so the first task was to buy a stove, refrigerator, and mattresses. We found everything we needed in our own neighborhood on Magazine Street, which was lined with junk shops. Homer built an eating nook and a counter in the kitchen. We furnished the huge front room as an office. Within a week, the place was livable and the office was furnished with new equipment — electric mimeograph and typewriter — and lined with worktables and file cabinets, and a huge old oak desk for me.

Homer was able to immediately get a job with Yellow Cab. The Super Bowl was coming to New Orleans at the end of January and thousands of football fans would be pouring into the city. Right on the heels of the

Super Bowl would be Mardi Gras and more tourists. Homer had to learn the city streets and pass a street map test before he was allowed to drive. Day and night, he pored over the map, and we drove through the streets trying to match up theory and reality. Learning to navigate New Orleans wasn't easy—there had been no apparent city planning—but Homer passed his test and started driving two days before the Super Bowl.

Learning the streets turned out to be easier than understanding the people of New Orleans. The term "race" proved inadequate to describe the distinctiveness and complexity of the groups that existed in that crossroads of the Spanish, French, and U.S. empires. It seemed as if New Orleans was made up of mini-nations sharing a small space that felt as if it might float out to sea or simply sink from the weight of history. The largest groups—the Cajuns, Africans, and Creoles—seemed to me to be frozen in time depending on when their Spanish or French or Acadian or African ancestors had arrived.

Race surely played a part in their distinctiveness, but not in the configuration I'd always understood it in the United States, because each group included all colors. Strict segregation based on race had been introduced when the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon, producing two French and Spanish Creole nations—one white, one black; a Cajun nation; and the Anglo-African nation, now living mostly in the projects out in Desiré. Among the Desiré Project Africans, young people were becoming Black Panthers, challenging the well-established New Orleans civil rights movement, as they had in cities all over the country.

In addition to descendants of the colonizers and the colonized, many other groups—Irish Catholic, Sicilian, Bavarian, Central American, Cuban, and Chinese, as well as migrant Texan oil workers—formed communities in New Orleans. And there were the mysterious merchant marines who came from everywhere and formed their own community. Their union hall/boardroom house was two blocks from where we lived—they looked like Disneyland pirates of the Caribbean to me. Our district, the Irish Channel, abutted the old-wealthy Garden District, but our

neighborhood was poor and run-down. Our neighbors were mostly Hondurans, Nicaraguans, and Guatemalans who had been drawn to New Orleans originally by the Standard Fruit and Steamship Company of New Orleans, which, along with Mobile- and Boston-based United Fruit, had made "banana republics" of their homelands.

We soon found out that we had company in the flat—a million mutant cockroaches, not ordinary roaches but giants that grew wings and flew like small birds. They ate everything, even the glue off book jackets and stamps, which made them drunk and fearless. Huge black rats also reamed the gutters and garbage cans of the Irish Channel. At times, I felt I was living in a medieval European city, that the bubonic plague would break out at any moment. There was scant evidence that I was within the bounds of the United States.

The FBI lost no time in finding me in New Orleans. A report dated January 30, 1970, notes:

Roxanne Dunbar on the mailbox for Apartment 2 at 1024 Jackson Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana.

January issue of the Southern Legal Action Movement newspaper contained an article concerning the Southern Female Rights Union (SFRU) headed by Roxanne Dunbar. It stated that the SFRU bases its work with women throughout the region, especially poor whites.

"Big fish in a small pond" was how Lou described the role that Homer and I assumed within the New Orleans movement community. Our office was a magnet. The movement in New Orleans had atrophied since the heady days of 1961 when the Freedom Riders had selected New Orleans as the end of their trek through the South.

Our status within the local movement stemmed not so much from our being outsiders but rather from the growing national publicity about me. My newfound fame from the *Time* magazine picture and the *Life* magazine article made it possible for us to make a substantial income from my speaking engagements at universities. However, since I was traveling all

over the country for them, I was unable to be part of day-to-day movement life, thus making it difficult for the local organizers to get to know me personally. Too often, it fell to Jennifer—she had joined us in New Orleans—who spoke and acted on my behalf.

Our flat was typical of movement houses, with the phone ringing, mimeograph thumping, typewriter tapping, constant visitors and meetings, and little sleep. As the FBI had observed, we'd named the new organization the Southern Female Rights Union—SFRU. Jennifer kept the office running smoothly. Although I told her she could use the office to work on her dissertation—she claimed to be assembling her research notes and writing—there was no evidence that she worked on it at all. We were already organizing a conference in New Orleans for International Women's Day on March 8, and she devoted herself to the task.

In addition to Jennifer, two women from the already existing New Orleans women's liberation group volunteered to spend evenings and weekends working with us on the conference: Laura was a fifty-year-old Acadian ("Cajun") woman originally from Lafayette, about 100 miles west of New Orleans. She had grown up rural and traditional and had been in and out of TB sanatoriums during her youth, losing one lung to the disease. She worked full time as a librarian at Tulane University.

The other woman, Connie Hepburn, edited the newsletter of the Southern Legal Action Movement that her husband, Bill Hodes, directed. She and Bill had both grown up in New Jersey and had lived in New Orleans for only two years. They were both red-diaper babies and quick converts to women's liberation. Connie had mastered all the turgid Marxist texts, which she patiently explained to us in the context of feminist theory.

Homer and I were not the only national movement figures who made New Orleans an organizing base. Dorothy and Bob Zellner, of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), had remained. Along with Lou and Ed, they ran the Bradens' SCEF project. Jack Minnis, formerly a muckraking journalist, had initiated a project within SNCC called "power-structure research," which provided methods and analytical tools for uncovering who owned what in a given community

as well as which politicians were owned and controlled by moneyed interests. Jack served as a kind of encyclopedic mentor and historian to everyone in the movement. His companion, Rhoda Norman, did similar research. Other civil rights veterans and members of the local women's group were Susan O'Malley, a literature professor at the University of New Orleans, and Cathy Cade, a Tulane graduate student.

Sue Munaker—who with Naomi Weisstein and other women had started Chicago Women's Liberation—had recently moved to New Orleans to organize support for the Chicago 7 defendants. Additionally, she had taken a job in a large hotel downtown and was trying to form a union among the mostly black women maids. None of New Orleans's service workers were unionized, although tourism was the city's largest industry. Sue's boyfriend was a local leader in the Spartacists, a small splinter Trotskyist group.

Rounding out the New Orleans white Left, the Maoist Progressive Labor Party—the nemesis of SDS—was represented by a married couple, Jill and Gi Schaefer. Their activities seemed to center on opposing anything attempted by the other Left groups. They published a small local newsletter and distributed the Communist Party's national weekly. Three years later, they would be exposed as FBI informers.

Not fitting into any of the categories but on the cutting edge of the counterculture movement was the bimonthly "underground" tabloid, *NOLA Express*, edited by Robert Head and Darline Fife. Both were poets, and Robert was a native of New Orleans. In the mid-sixties, both the Spartacists and the Progressive Labor factions had tried to take over the paper, which left a definite red tinge. At the time we arrived, Robert and Darlene were under indictment for obscenity, having published an issue of the *NOLA Express* in September 1969 that featured a young man masturbating over a cover of *Playboy*.

The movement person who impressed and affected me most in New Orleans was Virginia Collins, an international officer of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). The RNA had been founded two years earlier by black nationalists who argued that Africans in the Western Hemisphere

formed a distinct nation, and as such had the right to separate territories and nation-state status with United Nations membership. Within the United States, the RNA regarded all of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina as "subjugated territory" of the black republic. RNA's goal was to establish a "government-in-exile" and to gain U.N. recognition with the goal of pressuring the U.S. government to withdraw from the territory. Once sovereign, the new republic would implement an African-style socialism.

Virginia Collins was a small, solid, middle-aged woman with a soft voice that masked the fire inside. Her tiny house was in a working-class black neighborhood near Tulane. The first time I visited her, I sat in her cramped kitchen watching her shell peas and listening to her talk, as dozens of children ran in and out. Papers and books blanketed every surface. Virginia was a full-time, permanent revolutionary and I took her opinions very seriously. She carefully read the three issues of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* as well as the draft of the program I was working on to form the Southern Female Rights Union. In the first draft I had included demands for free birth control and sex education, legalized abortion, and the Equal Rights Amendment. She praised my analysis, my militancy, and my political direction, but with three exceptions.

"The demand to legalize abortion is racist. I know it would be nice for middle-class white women to have that convenience and I have no moral or religious disagreement with abortion, but it isn't those white women who would be forced to abort. Black and Puerto Rican women are being forcibly sterilized now. Genocide is a real issue for us. And those pills the government approved are deadly, you watch and see, the whole next generation of women will be dying of cancer."

Virginia showed me a pamphlet in which some former Peace Corps volunteers charged that forced sterilization was part of the Peace Corps mission in Third World countries as a U.S. strategy for population control. I told Virginia that her opinions were the opposite of those of Patricia Robinson and Flo Kennedy, two African-American women activists whose ideas I respected. Although she didn't know their ideas

and work, she dismissed their credibility: "Such *Negro* women strive for one thing—acceptance by whites," she said, enunciating "Negro" with contempt.

"And another thing, this demand for an equal rights amendment. Again, it would be nice for professional women, but think of women who work in factories and fields. Do you know how hard and long working women have struggled to gain protective legislation? And it's still a struggle; working women still don't have paid maternity leave or postnatal leave. The Equal Rights Amendment would wipe out the few gains they've achieved. You claim you want to bring poor and working-class women into the ranks of women's liberation, even as its core, but I can tell you, you will never attract any working-class or African woman worth her salt if you promote abortion and the ERA." (Virginia proved correct in her assessment of how ERA would be used against blue-collar workingwomen; a couple of years later, when Oklahoma passed the ERA, companies purposely put senior workers in jobs that required heavy lifting and fired them when they couldn't carry out the tasks.)

And so I removed the demands for legalized abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment from the Southern Female Rights Union program and inserted a demand for the withdrawal of birth control pills from the market for further testing. Although I was convinced by Virginia's logic and overwhelmed by her passion on these issues, I was never comfortable with the stance I assumed on the right to abortion and dreaded every occasion when the topic inevitably surfaced.

In early February, I began traveling outside the South. Rather than avoiding publicity, I accepted every invitation because I wanted to spread my views of women's liberation. I also did not want to continue to depend on Abby to finance my work, and the lecture fees brought in hundreds, and sometimes thousands of dollars each month.

My first trip was to Iowa in the dead of winter. In the Chicago airport at the gate for the connecting flight to Iowa City, I found Marilyn Webb of D.C. Women's Liberation. I was not aware that Marilyn was also sched-

uled to speak at the University of Iowa conference. I hadn't seen her since the previous summer when, unbeknownst to me, she had been three months pregnant. Now she was almost due. My heart sank as I wondered why any politically conscious woman would choose to have a baby when there was so much work to do. We sat together on the plane, and Marilyn said she would be lecturing on arrival then leaving immediately because of scheduling. She, too, was much in demand as a speaker on campuses, and was firmly committed to women's liberation. But I found myself wondering how long that could last once her baby was born.

Two days of nonstop lectures and workshops in Iowa City followed, and then I went to Ames to speak at an Iowa State YWCA event on women's liberation. The intense three days infused me with energy. I'd spoken with hundreds of young midwestern women who were emerging feminists. I was a teacher again, a real person and not an abstract image. Still, the lead article on the front page of the Iowa City newspaper, "Radical Women's Lib Speaker Urges Burning Ghetto Shops," distorted my answer to a question regarding urban black uprisings. It was obvious that the press was ever hungry for images of violence and that they would not shy from misrepresentations or outright lies in order to get them.

After only a few days in New Orleans, I was off traveling again. The National Student Press Association offered me a hefty fee to be a workshop leader for their annual meeting in Washington, D.C., the theme of which was ecology. When they said I would be paired with Flo Kennedy, I immediately accepted their invitation.

The conference site was a new hotel-convention center across from National Airport. I had never stayed in a luxury hotel with room service, a mini-bar, colored television, thick carpets, and a mint on the pillow at night. Flo knocked on my door a few minutes after I arrived. I hadn't seen her since the hair-cutting skit in November, and I hoped she wouldn't be angry with me. I should have known better.

"Too bad we both have short hair or we could repeat that class act you did in New York. It made my week."

Flo was a nearly six-foot-tall, sixty-year-old black woman who looked

no more than forty. She was a respected civil rights lawyer who had never married nor had children. She was the most self-assured and independent woman I'd ever met. The workshop on women's liberation was filled with mostly young white women. Men were allowed, and there were a few—also young, white, and long-haired. Flo specialized in being outrageous, beginning with her appearance. She wore a man's pinstriped suit, red tie, a fedora, and large hoop earrings, her arms ringed with noisy metal bracelets.

I attended the plenary session. "Ecology" was a new term that described a growing new movement. The keynote speaker, Alaska's Governor Hinckle, had been Lyndon Johnson's secretary of the interior. He had become ecology-conscious in the midst of Alaska North Slope and offshore oil development. I was suspicious of the budding ecology movement, viewing it as a Rockefeller Trilateral Commission "Green Revolution" plot to divert and dilute the cutting edge of the domestic revolutionary movement, and especially to absorb women's liberation into a "mother earth" pit, dulling our sharp message. I also viewed it as a means for white male liberals to assert themselves. Hinckle's speech didn't change my mind. He spoke of saving the pristine wilderness but had nothing to say about the impoverishment of the majority of the world's population, nor the greed for profits that fueled environmental degradation.

On another occasion, I returned to Boston, where Cell 16 had fulfilled one of my dreams by organizing a forum in historic Faneuil Hall in old Boston. In that hall, Lucy Stone, the Grimké sisters, Sojourner Truth, William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, and Frederick Douglass had held antislavery and profeminist meetings during the decades before the Civil War. Their legacy had motivated me to move to Boston to launch female liberation. As a twist of deliberate irony, Cell 16 had scheduled the meeting for George Washington's birthday, "to question the basis of white, male dominance of the United States," as the publicity flyer stated.

I had asked Cell 16 to invite Marlene Dixon to speak, and she agreed. Marlene had become an international celebrity. When she was refused tenure because of her radical activities at the University of Chicago, her

case had galvanized a highly publicized protest sit-in in the fall of 1968. It hadn't won her job back, but she was offered a position at McGill University in Montreal and traveled all over North America and Europe speaking on women's liberation. Marlene had written one of the early militant feminist articles in *Ramparts*, in which she described her violent and impoverished childhood and praised my views on the importance of class consciousness in the women's liberation movement. I was excited about meeting her.

The large auditorium was full of women—it was an event for women only—by the time I arrived. We would be speaking from an imposing oak dais that looked like a judge's bench. The walls were lined with magisterial portraits of the “founding fathers.” I recognized few faces among the hundreds of women. I was a little intimidated by the formal hall, which I'd never seen before, but my fears vanished when Marlene stood up to greet me. She was tall and large and had a big, husky voice and laugh. She exuded goodwill and self-confidence.

We divided our functions. Marlene would present the history of the U.S. women's rights movement and its links with the antislavery and labor movements, and I would talk about the meaning of that heritage in terms of the relationship of contemporary women's liberation to the civil rights and antiwar/anti-imperialist movements. Marlene lectured for nearly an hour, as she might have done in a university setting. Restlessness was voiced in coughs and squeaking chairs. I cut my presentation short so that discussion would be possible.

Dana moderated the meeting. When she opened the floor to discussion, women who identified themselves as radical lesbians popped up from various places in the auditorium and began to heckle us. They turned out to be “The Furies” from Washington, D.C., led by Rita Mae Brown. None of us in Cell 16 had heard of Rita Mae; several years later, she would be a best-selling novelist. One after another, the Furies shouted at us, questioning why we had not addressed lesbianism and accusing us of discrimination, of behaving just like male movement heavies, and of paying tribute to the slave-owning “founding fathers” by holding the meeting at

Fannuail Hall on Washington's birthday. I explained that the forum was not about sexuality, but rather about the history of women's rights, which brought even angrier accusations.

Other women in the audience yelled at the hecklers to shut up. The lesbian group chanted slogans. The meeting ended in chaos. Marlene remained calm and dignified throughout, saying that she had encountered lesbian anger in other meetings and that it was a normal part of the process.

The next issue of the *Rat*, a New York-based radical monthly, contained a criticism of the Boston symposium by Rita Mae Brown:

Female Liberation presented a panel discussion that divided between Marlene Dixon's endless rap on women's history and Roxanne Dunbar. . . . To date, the women's movement has consistently rejected women who are trying to build a new way of life, a life of loving other women. . . . Roxanne evaded the question again and again until I yelled, “Your silence is oppressive. Why do you oppress us?” Then she delivered what will always be in my mind one of the most incredible raps I've ever heard. “Sexuality is not the key issue. What I want to do is to get women out of bed. Women can love each other but they don't have to sleep together. I think that homosexuality is a chosen oppression whereas being a woman is the root oppression. I don't think it's that important.”

As we went down the long, steep steps to the road we talked among ourselves about how class split the old feminist movement. Our movement is splitting over the “lesbian” issue, or more precisely, women's oppression of other women. We must deal with this in a constructive way or we will be at each other's throats just as we were in Boston.

Rita Mae was right about one thing: There was no longer simply a division between radical and reformist women within the women's liberation movement, but there was also a serious rift over lesbianism.

Not surprisingly, my frequent public appearances attracted media attention, as well as the FBI:

International Women's Day meeting held at New Orleans, Louisiana on March 8, 1970. Roxanne Dunbar claims to be a Marxist-Leninist and is a national spokesman in the women's liberation movement . . . Dunbar played a major role in the meeting and organization of it.

The first event I organized in New Orleans was a daylong conference to commemorate International Women's Day. Nearly a hundred women crowded into the second floor of the St. Bernard Street YWCA, far more than we had expected. Seven workshops ran concurrently. I gave one on how the oppression of women could not be redressed under capitalism, and how capitalism could not be done away with without the liberation of women.

Following the conference, Lynn Sherr, an Associated Press wire reporter from New York (later with ABC News) interviewed me. Her article turned out to be more sympathetic than any that had appeared up to then, and it was picked up by small town and city newspapers all over the country.

Playboy magazine acknowledged International Women's Day in their March issue with their first diatribe against women's liberation, the article tucked between tits and asses. The article stated that feminists were all ugly man-haters with sour grapes about their inability to attract men. I was portrayed as one example of the odious phenomenon.

Then the inevitable happened—a national weekly news magazine featured women's liberation as a cover story. "WOMEN IN REVOLT" was emblazoned on the cover of the March 23, 1970, issue of *Newsweek*, along with a graphic depicting a broken male sex symbol and a woman inside with her fist raised. A *Newsweek* photographer had come to the office, and I posed for him in front of a poster of Sojourner Truth captioned "Ain't I a Woman?" But the *Newsweek* reporter who had interviewed me didn't know much about the movement and she had appeared shocked by everything I said. The segment on me made me laugh.

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Like Ti-Grace Atkinson, Roxanne Dunbar, one of the leading feminist theoreticians, assails all institutions that bind women to man—marriage, babies, love, and sex. Miss Dunbar was the first liberationist publicly to advocate masturbation as an alternative to what she sees as the slavery of heterosexuality. Her articles in *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES*, a Boston liberation periodical, have been widely read and her working class origins in what is primarily a middle-class movement have brought her special respect from other liberation leaders. "There is no such thing as a good relationship in this society between men and women or mother and children," she says in a soft, quiet voice that contradicts a tough, militant exterior. "I don't think we should assume anything until we have questioned everything." Miss Dunbar, 31, began by questioning nothing. The daughter of an Oklahoma cowboy and of a mother who never differentiated between her sons and daughters—"she told us we'd all be President"—Miss Dunbar was married while she was still in college. "I never questioned my role as a wife," she says now. "And I developed all the typical housewife symptoms—hysteria, nervousness, boredom, a desire to sleep all the time. I left my husband and child when my baby was one year old."

Always interested in black revolution, Miss Dunbar changed focus when she read Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex." She was a leader of the militant Boston Group, whose garb often included military fatigues and boots, but has now returned to the South to proselytize among Southern women.

Increasingly Marxist in her views, Miss Dunbar believes women must work with the black poor, Mexican-Americans, poor whites. "The last feminist movement failed—it was never able to make an alliance with working-class women," she says. "Sexism was used to divide people."

But just at the apex of media and popular interest in the women's liberation movement, its message was subsumed by the violence and tragedy

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of events unfolding on the revolutionary Left. Several of us were working in the office on March 6, 1970, when a call came for Homer from New York. I watched his face lose all expression, and I knew something terrible had happened. He hung up and sat down at the desk as if his legs would not support him.

"There's been a terrible accident. Three people dead for sure, maybe more. They were my friends." We all gathered around him and he told us that a house in Greenwich Village had exploded, that it was a Weatherman bomb factory, and two of his SDS friends, Diana Oughton and Ted Gold, had been identified as dead. A third body was so mutilated that it could not be identified. Later it was announced that the third dead Weatherman was Terry Robbins, and that Cathy Wilkerson and Kathy Boudin had escaped and gone underground along with all the other members of Weatherman.

I should not have been surprised by the Weatherman tragedy. Soon after we had arrived in New Orleans, Homer received news from a friend who had attended the SDS National Council meeting the previous December that Weatherman had tolled the death knell of the organization. They had called the meeting in Flint, Michigan, a "national war council." It was a sad story of chaos, with speech after speech glorifying death, violence, and killing. Weatherman had announced that Flint would be their last public meeting. They bid farewell to the movement and appealed to all activists to join them. Four hundred young people had showed up despite the meeting's lack of publicity. The Weatherwomen's position on women's liberation had been summed up in a five-page tract called "Honky Tonk Women."

For white women to fight for "equal rights" or "right to work, right to organize for equal pay, promotions, better conditions" while the rest of the world is trying to destroy imperialism, is racist. Any demand made by white people short of the total annihilation of imperialism can be granted by the pigs—and will be.

Our sad-eyed sisters' programs will never result in liberation for women. The strategy to win in Amerika is the strategy of interna-

tional insurrection against imperialism, and we, with them, must become revolutionaries and join the fight. We demand—not "Bread and Roses" to make our lives a little better and shield us from struggle a little more—but bombs and rifles to join the war being fought now all over the globe to destroy the motherfuckers responsible for this pig world.

Clearly, the Flint meeting announced to the world that the group was preparing to go underground, but they didn't actually do so until after the townhouse explosion. Soon afterward they began releasing regular communiqués that stunned the movement.

In the first message from underground, they claimed that some of the several hundred members of their group faced more years in jail than the 50,000 deserters and draft resisters in Canada. They also claimed that many draft resisters were returning to join the underground and that others were enlisting in the military to "tear it up from inside." The second communiqué announced a bombing.

Communique #2 From the Weatherman Underground: June 9, 1970. Tonight, at 7 p.m., we blew up the N.Y.C. police headquarters. We called in a warning before the explosion . . . They guard their buildings and we walk right past their guards. They look for us—we get to them first . . . They outlaw grass, we build a culture of life and music. The time is now. Political power grows out of a gun, a Molotov, a riot, a commune . . . and from the soul of the people.

Even the venerable I. F. Stone validated the seriousness of the Weather Underground. Stone was a sharp critic of the government, but was a known pacifist. Yet in the March 1970 issue of *I. F. Stone's Bi-Weekly* newsletter, he wrote:

Statistics on bombing from cities around the country suggest that we may be entering the first stages of an urban guerrilla movement.

A guerrilla movement is a political, not a criminal, phenomenon, however many crimes it may commit. Weathermen are the most sensitive of a generation that feels in its bones that we older people only grasp as an unreal abstraction: that the world is headed for nuclear annihilation and something must be done to stop it.

"Shouldn't we be preparing to go underground?" Sheila asked, more a statement than a question.

I didn't answer. Sheila was twenty-one, one of the thousands of "McCarthy Kids" who had witnessed their hero, Eugene McCarthy, being pushed off the stage at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. They were a disillusioned and angry group of young, white people, and they were fertile ground for the Weatherman influence. Weatherman also appealed to lost and alienated young white people of the counterculture.

The "hippy" and general counterculture phenomenon represented a total defection of a significant portion of a whole generation from the values and rules of the mainstream, and we who were politically aware had a responsibility to them, I thought. It seemed to me that we should construct institutional frameworks that could make constructive use of the energy and talents of these kids. And what if the war went on and on, until there was no more Vietnam, until it was engulfed in a chemical cloud of Agent Orange with every living thing slowly burning from napalm? How would all our theory stand up? And I wondered, were we in the women's liberation movement hiding under the bushel of consciousness-raising and reformism? At first, I pushed away such doubts as if they were heresy, but my previous certitude of the historic role of women's liberation began to crack.

My initial response to both the national publicity I'd received and to the dramatic actions of the Weather Underground was to stay close to home. I was well aware that in the wake of the bombings, every law enforcement and spy agency, local and federal, would pump up their surveillance and repression of publicly known activists, especially ones who, like

Homier and me, were acquainted with the new guerrillas. I decided to travel by car, and only in the South for a while, and began to organize a regional southern conference.

In order to launch the conference, Connie, Jennifer, Sheila, and I held a press conference to announce that the SFRU supported the census boycott all over the country to protest the undercount of blacks. Virginia Collins was leading the local effort and persuaded us to support it. We developed our own rationale for doing so. Our statement read:

The U.S. census automatically defines women's status only in reference to their husbands. A single mother cannot list herself as the head of household. Until these forms are corrected, we call for a boycott of the census. Women will no longer accept invisibility.

The local publicity gave us a boost. In preparation for the regional conference, the SFRU initiated a twelve-week series of successful women's liberation workshops, trying to reach beyond the small movement circle. Dozens of new women attended the meetings that were held in our flat. Each of our seven volunteer staff members created a session.

What kept me optimistic about women's liberation and the importance of the work I was doing were the responses of women I met with all over the South. Even at conservative Vanderbilt University in Nashville, my message was embraced. Several dozen young women, including a few black women, gathered to hear me. I talked for a half hour and asked for questions. They were shy, but finally a young woman spoke.

"It's as if you have just stated aloud my most hidden and feared thoughts. I can't believe someone else feels the same."

Her words unleashed what could only be described as "testimony"—examples of humiliation, of botched abortions, of pain, of mothers they did not respect. None of them had ever been politically involved, but now they decided to form a women's liberation group.

The following morning's *Nashville Tennessean* contained a long article based on an interview I did with Pat Welch, a young woman reporter.

Other than not getting the name of the organization right, the article was respectful and useful as an organizing tool:

March 25, 1970. "Life is not worth living for a woman in this society," a leader of the national Women's Liberation Movement said in Nashville last night.

"It's too degrading, too humiliating—there's no productive way for a woman to live in this society. So her only choice is to struggle for a way of life that would include all people," said Roxanne Dunbar, now with the Southern Female Rights Association, New Orleans. . .

"This is very much a grass roots movement," she told a reporter. "There is no central headquarters, no national leadership, but all the separate groups all over the country have developed similar ideas and principles. That shows there is a very strong need for women's rights. There is a basis of oppression that we can all understand."

The Southern Female Rights Organization has a six-point program, calling for:

1. Free public childcare from birth on, with no discrimination, either sexual or racial in the educational programs.
2. An end to sexual and racial discrimination in all jobs—including those of firemen and policemen.
3. Free self-defense instruction for women, with karate being the most practical.
4. A guaranteed annual income (each individual, not family) of \$2,400.
5. The withdrawal of deadly birth control pills from the market and development of safe contraceptives.
6. A new code of ethics for the media, removing the stereotypes of the "empty headed," "fickle," "bitch," "sexpot" and "happy housewife" women.

Miss Dunbar said women should not try to be like men in their

struggle for political power, but rather change the material basis of society and replace it with a "feminine consciousness"—or those values and goals usually thought of as feminine, such as peace and the nurturing and care of children.

That spring of 1970 was a time of constant travel throughout the South. Then, in the midst of our long hours of work organizing the last details of the conference, the world changed drastically: On April 30, Nixon and Kissinger announced bombing campaigns inside Cambodia, and within five days, students went out on strike at sixty colleges and universities across the country. On May 4, the National Guard fired on students at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four and wounding nine.

In response, thousands more students went on strike at 100 universities, while many other universities closed out the academic year early to avoid problems. ROTC buildings were incinerated on campuses throughout the country, including many in the South, one in New Orleans on the Tulane University campus.

On newstands, the cover of *Life* magazine featured a dramatic photograph of a wounded Kent State student surrounded by his peers. Inside the magazine, eight pages told the story in pictures and text. A Harris poll at the time reported demonstrations on 80 percent of U.S. universities and college campuses. Furthermore, the poll indicated that 75 percent favored "basic changes in the system" and 11 percent labeled themselves "radical" or "far Left," while 44 percent agreed that social progress was most likely to come through "radical pressures outside the system." Even *Business Week* in its May 16 issue warned:

The invasion of Cambodia and the senseless shooting of four students at Kent State University in Ohio have consolidated the academic community against the war, against business and against government. This is a dangerous situation. It threatens the whole economic and social structure of the nation.

Coincidentally, and adding to the local atmosphere of impending civil war, the capitol building in Baton Rouge was bombed and partially destroyed. A note said the action was in retaliation for the police killing three local blacks.

Organizing for the conference began to feel irrelevant and superfluous, but we went ahead with it anyway on Mother's Day weekend, only a week after the Cambodian airstrikes began. We had rented the Mt. Beulah Center, a black-owned and -operated civil rights conference site twenty-five miles west of Jackson, Mississippi. Twice the number of women we expected had preregistered, so there was little doubt that we would be able to fill the large facilities.

The day before the conference, I met Hannah, Dana, and Jayne, who had flown in from Boston to represent Cell 16. They brought the fourth issue of the journal—the first one I had not been involved with. The theme of the issue was “The Female State: We Choose Personhood.” Later, after all was quiet, I read the new journal and realized that there was no mention of capitalism and imperialism, of racism and class, of the Vietnam War. I reread the first three issues of the journal: Only my articles and those of Patricia Robinson and Mary Ann—both black women—had mentioned the role of the United States in the world, the Vietnam War, other national liberation movements, racism, and the working class.

At dawn, when I had finished reading, I tried to sleep but couldn't. I had always assumed that the women's liberation movement would automatically trigger connections and create female revolutionaries who would be actively antiracist, anticapitalist, and anti-imperialist. It seemed I was mistaken. For a moment, I considered walking away, simply leaving the conference and the women's liberation movement. I felt trapped. I think it was then that I realized I couldn't disconnect women's liberation from the class and anti-imperialist, anti-racist struggle, and that many women would consider me a traitor for taking that stand. I sleepwalked through the conference proceedings.

Saturday morning after breakfast, the conference began with a plenary session of keynote speakers. Jo Freeman, “Joreen,” a history professor and

one of the founders of Chicago Women's Liberation, spoke on nineteenth-century feminism. My topic was “Southern Womanhood and Southern Women: Black and White Reality.” And Evelyn Reed, a longtime leader of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party and author of a book on women's oppression, summarized Marxist thinking on “the woman question.”

After lunch, eight concurrent workshops lasted all afternoon. There were so many attendees that the workshops had twenty to thirty participants in each. For the majority of the southern women, the conference was their first experience with women's liberation. They were excited to be with hundreds of women who were connecting their personal feelings with theory and history. Despite my growing misgivings about the potential self-reference of the women's movement, I still felt that these encounters were powerful tools to inspire women to action.

I set out on a road trip to California right after the conference ended. I'd been invited to teach a short course on women's liberation at the Berkeley Theological Institute, and I'd patched together other university meetings en route, in New Mexico, San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and on the return drive, Fresno and Riverside. Now, given the nationwide campus protests against the U.S. military strikes in Cambodia, I had no idea what to expect.

Jennifer and I left New Orleans in mid-May. I didn't know her well, but because Jennifer ran the office and much of my schedule, I had become very dependent on her. I wanted to discuss the future since I assumed that she would soon have her doctorate. If she were to leave, we would have a hard time replacing her. I decided that she should accompany me to give us time to have this discussion and to get to know each other.

Traveling from San Antonio to Albuquerque, we passed various landmarks and museums commemorating, or commercializing, Billy the Kid. I told Jennifer what a childhood hero he'd been for me while growing up in rural Oklahoma.

“Imagine, a killer for a hero. I grew up with Goldilocks,” she said.

"Weren't George Washington and Andrew Jackson your heroes, and weren't they killers?"

"That's not the same."

"Yeah, Billy the Kid was a poor orphan boy and an outlaw. Your heroes were rich. They were the law—men of property—and their property was human. They killed more people than Billy the Kid could even imagine. They had whole armies to do it for them, not just a rag-tag gang." By now, Jennifer was actually taking notes.

In New Mexico, we stopped for two days to see Betita Martínez, whom I had met the summer before with Homer. Betita had arranged for me to speak to a women's group at the University of New Mexico. The Chicana student who had organized the meeting guided us around the periphery of the campus, which was occupied by National Guard troops. Several buildings had been burned, and windows were broken in others. Tear gas lingered and burned my eyes. The administration had cut short the semester and closed the university, barring students or anyone else from campus.

The students held the meeting in a church near the campus. A large, agitated, and somewhat unruly crowd—women and men—awaited my appearance. I did little talking, preferring to listen to them tell me about their strike. They spoke of arrests, beatings, tear gas, fear, and bravado. When the meeting broke up, several Chicano and Chicana students who had gone to Cuba on the second Venceremos Brigade in January asked me to stay and talk. I listened to them describe their six-week sojourn cutting sugar cane. Cuba sounded like a revolutionary paradise with dancing, music, energy, and the spirit of Ché. The students urged me to go on the next brigade in July, and I began making plans in my head.

At Betita's home in Española, we met with the local women she worked with. They related recent events at Tierra Amarilla, including descriptions of the endless trials and the death of two Chicano activists. Jennifer quietly took copious notes, nodding and smiling.

I was beginning to realize that Jennifer rarely made comments but only asked questions. And she wrote everything down. I was growing

uneasy with her, but I didn't trust my feelings because I also felt a kind of revulsion in her company that I interpreted as personal. Later, when I discovered that Jennifer came from one of the wealthiest families in Mobile—she had portrayed herself as a deprived daughter of a divorced single mom who worked in a dress shop—I realized the tension I felt was class-based. The barrier between us was becoming palpable by now, and I had given up on asking her about her dissertation because she never answered my questions. We left New Mexico, and she slept while I drove all the way to Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles we checked into a motel near UCLA in Westwood Village, and I walked the familiar few blocks to the UCLA campus. I hadn't set foot on my old campus since April 1968, and the sedate, countrified club ambience the campus had once radiated was gone. Now it teemed with milling, angry students—many of them Chicanos and blacks. Some of the students camped out on the quad at night—crumpled sleeping bags and blankets were scattered on the grass. Clusters of army surplus-clad students argued loudly. Others sat in hallways and on the steps of buildings. Handmade signs and banners shouted: "Shut it down!" "Remember Kent State!" and "Support Angela Davis." (Angela Davis had been hired at UCLA to lecture in philosophy, and was now being fired because she had announced publicly that she was a member of the U.S. Communist Party.)

In the morning, I turned on the television and heard the news that police at Jackson State, a black college in Mississippi, had killed two students. I called home, and Homer reported that he and Sheila had gone to Jackson the night before to support a peaceful student demonstration. They arrived at midnight to find chaos, ambulances, and hundreds of city and state police blocking streets. The two students had been killed and a dozen more had been injured when the police—all of them white—opened fire on a crowd of unarmed black students.

I was in L.A. to speak at a "working women's" conference at a trade school in South Central L.A. Despite the location in the middle of the black ghetto, most attendees were white. Around 100 Marxist women

attended. Many of them were Communist Party members or children of communists, and some of them had embraced Maoism. In my talk, I suggested that women would not wait for the victory of socialism or the end of racism and the war, that women were already rising up en masse: "How socialists relate to women's liberation will decide the political direction the movement takes. If women's liberation is shunned and has no positive interaction with the left, it will most likely be captured by the bourgeois."

"Feminists attack the nuclear family. As trade union organizers, we can't push that line on working people," a woman said.

"Maybe you should try talking to the women one-on-one or encourage them to form women's groups," I said.

"Nothing must divide the working class," a young woman yelled. It was a familiar tightrope that I constantly found myself walking between feminism and Marxism.

The other campuses where I spoke in southern California were similarly tense, particularly the University of California Santa Barbara campus, where the charred remains of the Bank of America stood as a symbol of the students' growing anger and frustration with the war. The building had been torched the previous February, and the campus had become an armed camp, one student shot dead by police. Now gangs of grim young people clustered as if facing imminent death.

By the time I reached Berkeley, I felt I'd been on a tour of battlefields. The Berkeley Theological Institute had booked me in the Durant Hotel two blocks from Telegraph Avenue. I sat at the window overlooking the street, watching the droves of acidheads and street fighters. I thought about David, my young South African friend, who had joined the Motherfuckers collective and relocated to New York.

"How did I end up in this position, watching the revolution from the window of a classy hotel?" I asked myself. Only months before, I had been an outlaw, and now I was a proper public lecturer. Had I changed or had the world changed? The Cambodian airstrikes and Kent State killings seemed to have polarized the movement so that anything short

of extreme rhetoric and violent action appeared insipid. Even the Berkeley Theological Institute was no liberal retreat.

The campus of the theology school was a beautiful, modern compound surrounded by gardens and redwoods. A poster on the wall told the story: Jesus had been transformed into a bearded man with something in his arms that looked like a rifle. On closer look, I saw that he did hold a gun—it was not Jesus, but Camillo Torres, the Colombian priest who had led a guerrilla war against the Colombian military and was killed in 1966. Due to influences of the second Vatican Council (1962–1965), a more radical Catholicism called Liberation Theology had arisen during the '60s, of which Torres was an example and a martyr.

My host was an African-American theologian who was well known in the civil rights movement and who enthusiastically supported women's liberation. He and the other participants had been inspired and influenced by Gandhi and Thomas Merton, by liberation theology, by Martin Luther King. They quoted and spoke positively of Ho Chi Minh, Nkrumah, Ché, even of Marx and Lenin, but never uttered the word "God." Instead, they used Jesus as an example of a human being who cared for the poor. They considered him the first revolutionary socialist; they recognized him as the first to condemn the family as an institution.

Back at my hotel room, there was a message from a women's group at Stanford inviting me to speak there the next evening. I called the woman, Mary Lou Greenberg, and accepted the invitation. She asked me to come early to have dinner with her and other women from the Revolutionary Union, a local Maoist organization affiliated with the Black Panther Party that had recently gone national. I had admired the organization from the time it formed a few years earlier as The Bay Area Revolutionary Union as an industrial workers' organizing project in support of the Esso Oil refinery strike in Richmond, north of Berkeley. Many of its first members had worked in South Bay factories. The founder was Bob Avakian, a Berkeley native whose father was a liberal judge. Recently the RU had merged with a Stanford group, led by Stanford professor Bruce Franklin, and with Venceremos, a Chicano community organization in Redwood City.

The women seated around a large table in one of the RU houses in East Palo Alto were white women in their twenties and thirties; they were students, faculty, and faculty wives. Several had taken jobs in offices and factories in order to organize workers. Mary Lou Greenberg and Jane Franklin, founders of the group, were the wives of two of the RU's leaders, Barry Greenberg and Bruce Franklin. Three years earlier, before the RU existed, Mary Lou had formed one of the first independent women's liberation groups in the Bay Area. But this new women's group was strictly beholden to RU theory and practice. They explained that they had been studying my writings in their RU study groups, as they were in the process of developing a position on women's liberation for the entire organization. And they had questions.

Their questions—statements, really—were typically Marxist-Leninist-Maoist: The triumph of socialism would be necessary in order to eradicate male chauvinism, and therefore women should organize to facilitate the socialist revolution while struggling against chauvinism; any gains for women under capitalism would be reformist, if not reactionary, and most certainly racist. They charged that the women's liberation movement was predominately white and middle-class and was shunned by militant blacks and Latinos.

As they stated their views, I felt swayed, and for the first time I experienced a tinge of embarrassment about my own views regarding women's liberation as the *basis* of social revolution. I found myself desiring that these women accept me as an authentic Marxist revolutionary. I was aware that they were not authentically interested in my views, but rather they wanted to recruit me to the RU as a way of attracting women recruits. And though I should have been wary, I felt flattered.

The public meeting took place in the Stanford University faculty lounge. By then I had regained my self-confidence and spoke truthfully rather than seeking approval. I even had the men kicked out of the meeting. There were around a hundred people in the audience, including the RU's local leaders and regular members. I was startled that there were also men in the audience, as I'd expected an all-women's meeting. I

told Mary Lou that I would prefer the men to leave. Apparently, the half-dozen men were RU men, because she quickly signaled to one, and they all left. I clearly stated what I thought then, and still think:

I am a Marxist and a revolutionary and I don't believe that has to be contradictory to women's liberation. It is a given that women will not be liberated under capitalism. No one will. But socialism is a long way off in this country, and women in existing socialist societies are not liberated despite sweeping economic and social changes. One thing has not changed under socialism where it exists—the nuclear family and male supremacy. The family is a prison for women, and men are the prison guards. Women are rising up all over the world, and it's a progressive mass movement that should be embraced by all sincere communists and socialists.

The next morning, as I prepared to leave Berkeley, a young man from the RU showed up at the hotel and asked if he could talk to me. We walked across the Berkeley campus and sat down on the steps of the library. He said that the organization's leadership wanted me to join the RU. I made no commitment other than to agree to his proposal that I speak at an RU-organized women's conference at the University of Oregon in July.

I had scheduled two speaking engagements for the return trip, and the first was in the California Central Valley. At Fresno State College, the audience in a cavernous auditorium was the largest I'd ever addressed: perhaps a thousand people, mostly women, many black and Latino, both students and community people. The organizers had built a large, diverse, and impressive women's movement on campus. I realized that women's liberation was reaching the hinterland—places like Fresno, Iowa, Kentucky—and that I and other traveling lecturers had much to do with spreading the message.

The Riverside meeting was something different. The University of California organizers had invited me to speak at their first-ever Earth Day celebration. Campuses and communities all over the world had orga-

nized rallies at noon on May 30, 1970, billed as "Earth Day." The center of the smog-shrouded, sterile campus was lit with life and music—young people more of the counterculture variety than politicians. It looked like a love-in from the mid-sixties, with people blowing bubbles and dancing barefoot to a live rock band. I met my contact—a serious Chicana named Vilma—at the stage.

"What can I do for you, Vilma? What would you like me to talk about?"

"Anything you say will be just great, something like the fact that struggling to save mother earth doesn't mean that we women are supposed to be earth mothers." We laughed.

"I'm going to quote you."

Vilma seated me on one of the folding chairs set up on the outdoor stage. I was to be the last of four speakers, with music in between each. I didn't pay attention to the first two speakers but the third one caught my attention. He was a middle-aged Belgian citizen who said he'd been an officer of the French Foreign Legion in Vietnam from 1951 to 1954. In a heavy French accent, he explained that he'd fought in the historic battle at Dien Bien Phu wherein Ho Chi Minh's guerrillas had defeated the French. During the battle, he had crossed over to the other side, as did many of the Legionnaires. He then fought alongside Ho Chi Minh's forces against the Americans who took up the mantle in 1954 after the French were defeated and pulled out. He asked, rhetorically, "Why did I do it? I wanted to be on the winning side. No one will ever defeat the Vietnamese."

I spoke next, and quoted Vilma to loud applause from the women, and said I wanted to be on the winning side, too, that I supported the Vietnamese and all the peoples of the world struggling against colonialism and imperialism.

I consider the fact that women are rising up massively to throw off their oppression as an indicator that we are on our way to bringing the empire down and transforming this country. Patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, racism, war, and the destruction of the earth

itself, cannot be separated for they come in a package. The earth is doomed if we don't make a revolution, and female liberation is the basis for social revolution.

The Belgian warrior hugged me. There were tears in his eyes. "You are absolutely right. The reason I became a mercenary was to prove myself a man. I did terrible things. The Vietnamese taught me how to be a human being."

While I was away, our Southern Female Rights Union had been sponsoring forums in the New Orleans public library, and attendance was booming. Laura had lectured on how Cajun culture, based on fishing, was being destroyed by the oil companies and industrial pollution. Connie and Sheila spoke on the legal system, and Homer on the police state. We had added community control of the police to SFRU's demands. We were shifting from specifics of women's issues to a larger political agenda.

Connie, Sheila, and Homer had been visiting Jackson State to investigate the police killings of the students. I went there with them soon after I returned. They also had been working with the faculty and staff of a small, all-black school outside Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and took me to meet them. These black and white civil rights workers had never left, and continued to work with black sharecroppers' children. They had little information about what was happening in the larger world, and they reminded me of Homer's story about the National Liberation Front cadre who worked in isolation for years in a village of tailors.

I believed that my role was to find a way to organize rural poor and working-class whites, especially women, who were as shunned by organized labor as they were by the wealthy, yet bore the brunt of accusations of racism. To further that goal, I invited Bill "Preacher" Festerman, one of the founders of the Young Patriots in Chicago, to assist us. The organization was one of the many spinoffs from the Black Panther Party—the Chicano "Brown Berets," Puerto Rican "Young Lords," and the Minneapolis-based American Indian Movement were others—who

formed street patrols in their communities and challenged police harassment. I'd met Preacherman the summer before, and had been impressed with his work with disenfranchised young Appalachian men living in Chicago. Preacherman, a theology student at the University of Chicago, was a colorful character. He was a smart hillbilly. He looked like a cross between Johnny Cash and the young Elvis. His black leather bomber jacket was too heavy for the New Orleans heat, but he wore it doggedly, along with black cowboy boots and a black cowboy hat.

"Who'd ever have thought the Patriots would get hitched to a women's lib outfit. Regular bunch of Mother Joneses. Now don't get me wrong. Wait till you meet my wife—she's a women's libber all the way," Preacherman said.

I told him I objected to the use of the moniker "Patriot," explaining that I thought it played into a reactionary mythology dating back to Andrew Jackson and Indian killing, and that the very definition of patriotism was patriarchy.

"First you got to get their attention and then teach them something through action," Preacherman said.

"But are you teaching them about the myths of United States history and the poor white role, or are you reinforcing the myths and exploiting their populist anti-big government and anti-Semitic ideas?" I asked.

"You get these white kids hooked up with blacks or Puerto Ricans or Indians, and their racism disappears. I've seen it and that's enough for me. I ain't inclined to intellectualizing too much," he said.

We organized a meeting of movement people for Preacherman. He preached a powerful sermon about how poor whites could become revolutionaries. Republic of New Afrika members who were there told Preacherman about the pulp mill strike in Laurel, Mississippi.

"The workers are black and white and before they were enemies, but with this strike they're on the same side. You know who meets us outside of town and rides shotgun to take us to the meetings?"

"Who?" Preacherman was interested.

"The Ku Klux Klan."

"I'm not surprised. The Klan gets those ignorant white boys and plays on their prejudices and talks bad about the government being too liberal and controlled by Jewish bankers. You know why? Because nobody else tries to get to them. Why, when Dr. King was organizing the Poor Peoples' Campaign back in 1967, before the CIA killed him, he was organizing the poor whites and they were joining. That's when I joined the movement. I was a racist as bad as the next one."

I mentioned to Preacherman that I would be speaking in Eugene, Oregon, at the end of the month and had heard there was a Patriot group there.

"We're there, mostly Okies like your people." Preacherman gave me a telephone number in Eugene.

In Eugene, I called the number Preacherman gave me and was invited to stay in the Young Patriot house. The Revolutionary Union had paid my airfare and an honorarium and wanted me to stay with them, but I preferred to get to know the transported Okies. The Patriots and the RU weren't at odds; in fact, Sylvia, the woman who ran the Patriot house, worked closely with the RU. She was an intense, tall woman who'd grown up in an Okie migrant family of fruit pickers. She was not a student or related in any way to the university, nor were any of the Patriots I met.

In the Patriot house I stayed up most of the night talking with angry young white men and women whose families had migrated from the Southwest during the Dust Bowl. They were extremely alienated from their families and the rural, poor white culture in which they'd grown up. They were angry that the only work available to their fathers was cutting ancient redwood trees. Creedence Clearwater's "I Ain't No Fortunate Son" played repeatedly on the stereo. I heard myself, saw myself in them.

In earlier times, the racist Klan or the right-wing Minutemen might have attracted them (as later the revived KKK and Aryan Nation would). But at that moment, these descendants of the frontier trekkers, spiritual descendants of Indian killers like Daniel Boone and Andrew Jackson, were being led and educated by the Black Panthers. They were con-

fronting white supremacy and capitalism and imperialism, but I felt that if they didn't confront patriarchy, it would all fall apart and poor whites most likely would return to the advantages offered by white supremacy.

They gave me a small room to sleep in for the few hours remaining before my lecture. I stretched out on the floor to do some sit-ups and was jolted by what I saw under the bed—dozens of M-1s and clips full of bullets. I slept on a bed of guns.

The lecture was organized by a number of groups, although the Revolutionary Union was dominant. Over 200 people showed up, including the RU men. As a woman from the RU took the microphone to introduce me, a woman in the audience yelled that the men should leave.

"This meeting was not organized for women only," the RU woman responded.

The women stomped their feet and chanted, "Vote, vote!"

I rose from the front row of the theater-style lecture hall and turned to the crowd, waving my arms. The noise died down.

"There's only one way to solve this problem democratically. The men should leave voluntarily."

After a moment of silence, the men left quietly as the women applauded and stomped.

I spoke about the evolution of my own thinking and gave my assessment of women's liberation based on two intense years of experience.

"In our group in New Orleans we have decided to take jobs in industry and to collaborate with working women—we consider prostitutes, housewives, and domestic workers to be working women—to develop one big women's union."

I explained my view that women should form revolutionary collectives that could be made up of both men and women, as long as they were female-initiated and women retained the right to meet separately. I believed that such groups should organize against racism, capitalism, war, poverty, and imperialism, and should work toward building an autonomous women's organization that would raise the consciousness of women to struggle for equality within socialism.

When I returned to New Orleans, Homer picked me up at the airport in his cab. "Jennifer's disappeared," Homer reported.

"What do you mean, disappeared?"

"Yesterday morning she talked for a long time on the telephone then said she had to run an errand. She didn't return last night."

"You think she's an FBI informer, don't you?"

"I know she's some kind of informer. This morning Sheila and I went through her things—she took nothing but her wallet with her. You won't believe it, but she left all the evidence," Homer said.

"Like what?"

"You'll see. She made carbon copies of everything. That stuff she sent her adviser goes beyond dissertation material—for example, a list of all the books in the SFRU office and an inventory of every piece of information we've produced. And there's evidence that she sent her adviser copies of a detailed psychological profile of you, verbatim accounts of every meeting, including the ones during your trip—all raw data. It seems to be you, not the group or the women's movement, that she focused on."

"No ordinary dissertation adviser wants all those documents—they want the student's analysis. Anyway, her dissertation is on violence. What does that have to do with us?" I said.

"Precisely. There are letters from her adviser indicating what he wanted her to send. He was pressuring her, and in one letter, he threatens to cut off her fellowship if she refuses to send a psychological profile of you."

Sheila, Homer, and I sat on the floor around the box of Jennifer's papers. Her psychological profile portrayed me as a potentially violent revolutionary who admired Billy the Kid and had contempt for the law. She wrote that I dominated the group in a Manson-like way.

"Do you suppose they assign an informant to each and every movement leader?" I asked.

"They did that with Fred Hampton; made the informant his trusted bodyguard," Sheila said.

"Well I'm no Fred Hampton. I wonder who her supervisor was working for?" I asked.

"Could be the FBI, the CIA, or the intelligence agencies of the army, navy, or air force, or even the Treasury or the IRS—they all have spy operations," Homer said. He had been researching U.S. police power.

"But why did she leave all this stuff?" I asked.

"I think either her boss ordered her to get out fast or she rebelled against him and decided not to betray us anymore, or maybe both. I doubt that she was an experienced professional," Homer said.

"Maybe naïveté is just part of her cover and she is a pro. If she's not exposed, she could go on and work in the women's movement, we've given her credibility," Sheila said.

"We have to find her and talk to her," I said.

We left immediately for Mobile. Using the Mobile address Jennifer had given us, to our surprise, we found a colonial mansion in the wealthiest district. Sheila went to the door, and in a few minutes, Jennifer came out to the car with her. She looked terrified.

"Jennifer, we're not going to hurt you. I think you know I am not a violent person. We just want to know whom you are working for. Will you please just tell us that? Will you come with us to explain?" I said.

Tears mixed with mascara rolled down her cheeks. "You cannot know how sorry I am. I'll tell you anything I know." She got in the backseat.

We parked near the waterfront and walked six blocks to a noisy flophouse and checked in. We were armed only with a tape recorder. Three hours later, we were hungry and exhausted. Jennifer had repeated three phrases over and over in answer to every question: "I did only what I was asked to do"; "I did it to continue receiving my fellowship"; and "I don't know if any government agency is receiving the information."

"Why did you leave all that stuff behind?" I asked.

"I did what I was told."

I asked her why she had lied to us about her socioeconomic background, and she insisted she was not rich.

I suggested to Homer that we go next door to get some food and cof-

fee. As we waited in the waterfront café for oyster loaves, I mused, "It was no accident she left that stuff. It's meant to make us paranoid, for us not to trust anyone new."

"Well, it's sure working," Homer said. We laughed for the first time all day.

Jennifer hungrily devoured her sandwich. Sheila put a new reel of tape on the recorder. And we went at it for three more hours, with the same result.

At midnight, we gave up. I gave Jennifer a \$10 bill and told her: "Call a cab or stay the night—the room's paid for. We'll be watching you, Jennifer. You'd better lie low. Do not even think of getting involved in women's liberation or contacting the people you've met through me."

Exhausted, we drove back to New Orleans, arriving before sunrise. I opened the front entry door to our house and encountered a stranger, a young white woman, blocking the stairway.

"Who are you?" I demanded. She rushed past us and out the door.

"Could be anyone," Homer said.

"That's never happened before," Sheila said. We never locked the outside door.

"I think she's a cop. She was sent to set us up, but she lost her nerve," I said. Paranoia or accurate assessment? We checked carefully for drugs or weapons she might have planted but found nothing.

Later that morning, the other women in the group listened to the hours of tape.

"I never did trust her. Rich people from Mobile are not to be trusted," Laura said.

"What does it matter if she's a conscious pro or an innocent dupe? The result's the same. In Kentucky we'd say a horse of another color," Karen said.

"We have to let other women's groups know about her," Sheila said.

After many days of discussions, we decided that Jennifer's association with us had tainted the Southern Female Rights Union, and we changed our name to "New Orleans Female Workers Union." We also agreed that

rather than simply "blacklist" Jennifer, we should analyze the context in which she functioned. We composed a letter to the women's movement.

Last week we discovered that one of the members of our women's study group, a graduate student at the Heller School of Social Work at Brandeis University, which is intimately connected with the Lamberg Center for the Study of Violence (also at Brandeis), was sending detailed reports of our meetings in order to continue receiving her stipend. . . .

We are afraid that other such people may be active in the women's movement—people connected with university departments which thrive on studies of movement and left-wing activities. Whether such things are done "innocently" as part of the desire to get degrees or receive stipends, or whether it is done in a conscious way to feed information to the government, the end result is the same.

The research that some of us and others in left movements have done reveals that this information is used at the highest level to break movements, both in this country and everywhere else in the world. Universities and research institutes are increasingly being used by the ruling class as information sources for psychological warfare (sometimes called "software" techniques) against peoples' movements as well as for developing the physically destructive "hardware" machinery for their counter-insurgency work.

We didn't name Jennifer. I believed that it wasn't an isolated incident and that the denunciation of one individual would not make a valid statement. Instead, I wrote personal letters identifying her to Betita, to members of Cell 16, and others who had met Jennifer with me.

After Jennifer's departure, we became caught up in a current of repression and paranoia. During that summer of 1970, there were one or two or three pale blue New Orleans police cars parked across the street from

our house every day. The cops took pictures and a suspicious, unmarked car with Illinois plates followed us. We held our evening meetings at Laura's rather than at the office, and we installed a heavy lock on the flimsy wooden door.

Lou and Ed, who lived on the ground floor, became nervous. Lou started staying at her mother's house and most nights Ed stayed out drinking until dawn.

After a week of police surveillance, we decided to arm ourselves. I think we were well aware that it was a practical rather than a political act, something we needed for self-defense in order to continue working, not at all embracing armed struggle for our group. We knew that law enforcement authorities would think twice about attacking us if they knew we were armed. In reality, we were joining a trend in the movement across the country, and once armed, our mindsets changed to match the new reality. It was a gradual process, but it was the beginning of a profound shift in our consciousness and our activities.

Homer and I drove across the Lake Ponchartrain causeway to a gun show that was held weekly in a big tin shed on the Slidell fairgrounds. The pickups and vans of traveling gun dealers, with license plates from a dozen states, were parked around the site. Inside the shed, the scene was festive, like any ordinary trade show. There were children running and playing, middle-aged women sitting on folding chairs visiting with each other, younger women clutching infants and staying close to their men, vendors hawking wares and bargaining, U.S. and Confederate flags waving. Everyone was white. We had no trouble finding the used 9mm automatics we sought. We chose three Brownings for \$100 each, clips included, and a case of military surplus ammunition.

"We're looking for a good shotgun, too," Homer said to the dealer.

"For protection or duck huntin'?" the vendor asked.

"Protection."

"You can't beat this here Mossburg 500 12-gauge police special riot gun."

"Isn't it illegal to have a sawed-off shotgun?" I asked.

"Ain't no saw-off. It's made that way. Legal as taxes."

We bought it, along with some buckshot shells, all for cash. No paperwork required. The man who sold us the guns also had for sale a number of swastikas in various forms—pins, arm patches, photographs.

"Let's get out of here," Homer said.

Sheila went to the Tulane law library to research Louisiana gun laws, reporting: "There are no gun laws in Louisiana. The only restriction is that you can't build an arsenal—defined as more than twenty automatic or semi-automatic weapons—for illegal purposes. You can even carry a concealed, loaded handgun in Louisiana."

"What about federal laws?" I asked.

"Just the usual—transporting across state lines for sale or to commit a crime, stolen weapons, removal of serial numbers, some foreign weapons like the AK-47."

We kept the loaded shotgun at the door, and we joined an indoor shooting gallery at Lafayette Square. We practiced with the Brownings every day. Shotguns weren't allowed at the shooting club, but a shotgun took no skill, only nerve and a steady shoulder to fire.

Soon after, we acquired rifles and we devised a story for joining a rifle club out in the West Bank area. Homer and Sheila would pretend to be a married couple; Hannah and I would be Homer's sisters. We would explain that Homer wanted all the "lady folk" to learn how to shoot. We loaded the bed of the station wagon with four M-1s, a Winchester .22, a .30-30 with a scope, and the riot shotgun, all purchased at the gun shows in Slidell. We paid for membership in the National Rifle Association and affixed their red and black emblem to the back window of the car. Homer hated being associated with the NRA, but I insisted on it as a rationale for our growing stash of weapons, and because cops were known to not stop vehicles with the stickers.

The rifle range was isolated, off the highway down a sandy road. The landscape was flat, treeless, and marshy. When we arrived at opening time at eight in the morning, no one but the owner was around.

"Call me Red," he boomed. Red was a large, red-haired man. He

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informed us right away that he had been a paratrooper and fought "gooks" in Korea. Homer explained our motives, and Red seemed pleased.

"All ladies needa learn to shoot, that be my opinion, my womenfolk sure done. Guns is an equalizer. I'm all for this women's lib," he said.

We filled out applications for membership using our real names. It was a part of our strategy to exhibit and document our interest in weapons and self-defense in case we were raided. As long as the possession of weapons was open and legal, the law protected us. We went daily to the pistol shooting gallery in Lafayette Square to practice with the small arms we'd bought. We now owned a snub-nosed Smith and Wesson .357, an S&W long-barreled .38, a Walther PPK 9mm, a Colt .45, a Beretta .32 automatic, plus the favored weapon each of us routinely carried—our Browning 9mm automatics. We'd purchased all the weapons legally and anonymously at gun shows. Now I shared the third-floor studio with a closet full of guns, our new shotgun reloading equipment, and a 100-pound bag of gunpowder. Wanting the law enforcement authorities to know that we were armed and relying upon FBI interception of our mail, I'd been writing to my father about my new hobby—guns and gunsmithing—and it seemed the first thing I'd done in my life that made him really proud.

"When you can shoot a squirrel in the eye with a .22 at forty yards on the first shot, you'll be a shooter," he wrote. I thought of what Martin Luther had written about breaking the Vatican's rule of priesthood by marrying, that he had done it to please his father and displease the pope. I wondered if my newfound love for guns was related to a desire to please my father and displease the government.

At any rate, we all had clearly fallen under the spell of guns, as had many other radicals. Our relationship to them had become a kind of passion that was inappropriate to our political objectives, and it ended up distorting and determining them.

When a former Texas SDS friend of Sheila's called for our support, we packed up our weapons and drove to Houston. He told Sheila that a series of acts of police violence in the black community of East Houston

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had produced unrest and some rioting. The white activists of the John Brown Committee were organizing a demonstration to support the black community, and we agreed to participate.

It was terribly hot and humid. The suffocating air lifted a little during the drive, but it was soon replaced by a fierce, hot wind. By the time we reached Houston, it was raining—never good news for a demonstration. East Houston was an ugly, industrial place that smelled of oil and sulfur; its wet air was sooty and acidic.

At the site where the demonstration was to take place, something grave had already happened. The streets were blocked off, and Houston police in riot gear swarmed over area. Black youths darted across streets. Sheila called her friend, who told her that the Black Panther office had been raided and two people had been shot—Carl Hampton, the founder of the local Panther chapter, and Bartee Haile, a white ex-SDSer. Carl's injuries were serious; Bartee had suffered only surface wounds. We were asked to go to the hospital to demonstrate, as there was fear that they would allow Carl to die. Carl Hampton (who was not related to Fred Hampton) was a young black man who'd grown up in East Houston and had set up the Black Panther chapter only a few months before.

There was no demonstration outside the hospital. We managed to make our way to the hallway outside the operating room where Carl Hampton lay dying. We stood in the hall with his mother and younger brother as Carl was pronounced dead, five minutes after we arrived.

In silence, we drove home against the wind.

My long essay that had been written nearly two years earlier, "Female Liberation as the Basis for Social Revolution," was published in a Beacon Press anthology—*Voices of the New Feminism*—edited by Mary Lou Thompson, and in Random House's *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, edited by Robin Morgan. The books contained impressive rosters of feminist thinkers—Mary Daly, Shirley Chisholm, Naomi Weisstein, Kate Millet, Frances Beal, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Elizabeth Martínez, Marge Piercy, Florynce Kennedy, Betty Friedan, and so many others. Robin even

included a long excerpt from the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*. Those were the first two books to give voice to the new women's liberation movement.

Somehow, to me the anthologies and my contribution to them seemed the end, rather than the beginning, of something. Although I felt that women's liberation was an integral aspect of the direction I was taking, it was no longer foremost in my thinking. In retrospect, I think that I lost my bearings for a time. I was about to make some very unwise choices.

VII
CUBA LIBRE

DURING THAT SUMMER of 1970, an old SDS friend of Homer's came to New Orleans in a last-minute attempt to recruit more southerners for the third contingent of the Venceremos Brigade to Cuba. At a quickly assembled meeting with movement activists, Carol told us that the brigade organizers were concerned because out of nearly 500 people who had signed up, only 10 were from the south. They were ex-SSOC people who now worked on the *Great Speckled Bird*, a movement newspaper, and all were from Atlanta. The third brigade was to be much larger and more diverse (the first two brigades had comprised mainly SDS militants, nearly all white) and was to work in citrus production on the Isle of Youth.

Our group discussed who among us might go and decided on Sheila and me. We recruited three others from New Orleans—two young black men from the Republic of New Afrika and Sharon, a young white woman who was a high school antiwar organizer. When I called Mary Lou Greenberg in California to tell her I was going, she suggested that I work with the RU collective on the brigade in order to become more familiar with the organization, its style of work, and its politics.

The brigade was scheduled to leave from St. John's, Nova Scotia, on a Cuban ship on August 6, a week hence. But the ship did not arrive in Canada on August 6. For weeks, we hung in limbo. The thermometer in New Orleans crept above a hundred degrees and never dropped below, not even at night. The air was heavy and wet. Torrential rain caused the sewers to overflow. The streets were nearly deserted at midday. Homer bought a small air conditioner for the office to protect the equipment and the guns. At night, we dragged our sleeping bags in there and slept on the floor.

Members of our group often sat outdoors under the canopy at the Café du Monde drinking chicory coffee—the breeze off the Mississippi made that spot the coolest place in town—discussing the state of the revolution, especially the rumblings inside prisons and what we were beginning to see as a very probable necessity for armed revolution. I stared at the Andrew Jackson statue across the street and studied the movement of the sun by its shadow while I fantasized blowing it up.

Meanwhile, as I waited in what felt like a state of passive lethargy, disturbing events were continuing to unfold. On August 7, in the San Rafael, California, courthouse, a black prisoner, James McClain, was on trial for assault stemming from a fight in San Quentin prison. Two other black prisoners, Ruchell Magee and William Christmas, were witnesses in McClain's defense. All three prisoners were followers of George Jackson, who had become a Black Panther leader inside San Quentin prison and was now a world-famous political prisoner due to a best-selling book, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, with an introduction by Jean Genet.

During the trial, Jonathan Jackson, George's seventeen-year-old brother, walked into the courtroom with a carbine and ordered everyone to freeze. Young Jackson freed the prisoners, taped a sawed-off shotgun to the judge's neck, and led him, along with the district attorney and jurors, to a van in the parking lot. Jonathan's objective was to hold the judge hostage and demand the freedom of his brother, George Jackson. Once they were all inside the van, a San Quentin guard shot at it and

kept firing. The judge was killed. McClain, Christmas, and young Jackson were killed. Magee and the others not killed in the van were wounded, and Magee was charged with murder. Two days later an arrest warrant was issued for Angela Davis, in whose name the shotgun used by Jonathan Jackson had been registered. Angela Davis went into hiding.

I had second thoughts about leaving, torn between staying and working on the issue or going. But on August 20, when the call finally came that the ship had arrived, I didn't hesitate.

Homer drove the five of us New Orleans volunteers to Atlanta to catch the chartered bus that would transport all of us from the South to Canada. Cuba was the same distance from New Orleans as Atlanta, but the U.S. government barred U.S. citizens from visiting Cuba. One of the purposes of the Venceremos Brigade was to challenge the U.S. travel ban and economic blockade of the island. Until 1969, it had been easy for U.S. citizens to circumvent the law and travel to Cuba through Mexico, and the first two brigades had done so, but since then the Mexican authorities had begun to allow the CIA to photograph U.S. travelers to Cuba at the Mexico City airport, and so the departure point had been switched to Canada.

The National Venceremos Committee and their Cuban counterparts had structured the brigade into regional sub-brigades. We were expected to work together in Cuba so that when we returned to the United States, we would unify our local movement work across political, personality, gender, and race lines. The Republic of New Afrika members were the only blacks among the two dozen of us from the South. The majority of our group was women, including several lesbian activists from Atlanta.

We crossed the Canadian border and traveled six more hours to St. Johns, a fishing village that smelled and felt English. Check-in took place in a warehouse on the dock. In the milling crowds of disoriented fellow gringos, I found a former SDSer from Boston who had been on the editorial collective of the *Ole Mole*, a close friend of Homer's who had visited frequently, then disappeared. We assumed that he had gone underground with Weatherman. Frank's father was a Japanese mathemat-

ics professor at a midwestern university, and his mother was white. He had grown up as the only Asian child in a small, nearly all-white college town. I hadn't seen him for two years, and I was disturbed now by his incoherence and frailty. He said his only income for months had come from selling his blood.

"At least I'll have three square meals a day and a bed in Cuba." Frank confirmed that he had gone underground for a short time, but it was apparent that all his former dedication and energy had drained away. He was twenty-two years old.

At last, we boarded the Cuban ship, and I felt trapped in the rush to stake territory. I held back and stood on the deck watching the sky of the midnight sun. When I ventured below into the women's dormitory, I discovered that the metal bunks were three-tiered and only a few unclaimed beds remained—all on top, close to the damp ceiling. I chose a bed in a cluster of bunks near the outside door and asked the Asian-American women who occupied that area if I might join them. They stared at me without answering. I climbed the metal ladder to the top, and from there, I could see the whole room of around 200 women. They had segregated themselves into black, Latina, Asian, Native American, and white, with the lesbians, all white and mostly from Atlanta, in their own group. I spotted Sheila and Sharon among the white women. We waved to each other.

A loud bell clanged and everyone moved toward the door. I was already nearly asleep, but I climbed down and followed the crowd to the dining area where the 300 or so men of the brigade had already gathered. We took seats on the long benches at the tables, and we filled out forms. One by one, we were photographed and given identity cards.

The passage to Cuba was supposed to take five to six days, but nine days passed before we sighted Havana. The ship itself was old and rusty—a U.S. merchant marine vessel circa World War II, afterward used as a banana boat by United Fruit and then confiscated by the Cuban revolutionaries following their victory. When a deckhand told me the ship's history and I considered the few flimsy lifeboats, I slept very little that night.

Only on deck, staring out to sea, could I block out the interminable noise and squabbling among my compatriots. There was no escape, no private corner or space, often not even a space to sit down. The only recourse was to lie flat on my bed in the airless, smelly dormitory. By the end of the second day, the women's toilets were unbearably filthy and nonfunctional, and the stench filled the dormitory. Bloody sanitary napkins and tampons were strewn about, along with toilet paper and paper towels that ran out about the third day. The two cold-water showers for 200 women were never free and a peek inside one convinced me to forget about bathing. The men reported an equally disgusting mess in their toilets.

On the third day, the Cuban official in charge gave his first and only lecture of the trip.

"Many have reported that the toilets are malfunctioning and dirty. There are no servants on this ship, only professional sailors and a cook and those of us on the staff. You are to clean up after yourselves as we do." But nothing changed and the situation only worsened.

Mealtime provided little relief. We ate in groups of a hundred people, and at times the noise was deafening. The food was the same at every meal—boiled codfish, rice, and thick coffee.

We never lost sight of land as we plied the Atlantic just outside U.S. territorial waters. When we were parallel with the Norfolk military installation, navy planes and helicopters flew around and over, very near the ship. They were photographing, the Cubans said, and rushed us below. Every evening at dinner, the Cubans reported the news they received from Radio Havana on the short-wave radio.

The first day at sea, news came that the Army-Math research center at the University of Wisconsin had been bombed, accidentally killing one man. Unidentified radicals left a message claiming credit. I assumed it was Weatherman, but it turned out to be a lone local, helped by his brother.

Soon after, we received news that Ruben Salazar, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter, the first Chicano on the staff, had been shot dead by police, along with two others at the 20,000-strong Chicano Moratorium rally